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COVER: Ryan Villopoto whips up a storm as he prepares for the Anaheim SX season opener © Steve Cox

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COMMENT

I doubt very much there's a world title at stake for over-doing it at Christmas but if there is my speech from the top step of the podium will include heart-felt endorsements of the products produced by Moët et Chandon, Guinness, Cockburn's, Stella Artois, Weston's, Marks and Spencer, Thorntons, Toblerone, various vineyards from France to New Zealand via South Africa and California plus assorted cheese-makers, especially those specialising in brie, Stilton and my new fave Shropshire Blue. In fact, I've eaten so much of the stuff that my much-better-half's 11-year-old son has taken to following me around the house enquiring "more cheese Gromit?" before deftly ducking a Cheddar-powered haymaker and skipping safely out of range.

I know I'm not the only one who's cut loose on the grog and gone buckwild on the cheeseboard this Christmas – Jake, Gordy and Swordy all admit as much in their columns – but the party's over for another year and it's time to get down to the serious business of testing, training and generally preparing for the coming season. Obviously, that last statement applies to Jake, Gordy and Swordy but not to me. No-one would ever pay me to race and, anyway, there are still a few bottles left in the Lawless wine cellar (okay, semi-derelict garage) and enough Stilton in the fridge to get me to the early stages of gout!

This 'ere copy of DBR you're holding in your hands is a bit of a landmark issue for me. It's hard to believe that this time 10 years ago I was sweating over a hot keyboard to get my very first copy of DBR to the printers. Over the following decade loads has changed in the sport as technology has progressed but one thing that has always remained constant is the anticipation each new season brings and 2011 is promising more of the same.

When you read this the opening round of the AMA SX series will be done and dusted but – at the time of writing – Anaheim's shaping up to be a mouth-watering race with Tommy Searle contesting the Lites and Ryan Dungey, Chad Reed, James Stewart and Ryan Villopoto going head-to-head in a stacked 450 class. How good is that going to be? And when the series hits the East Coast we've got the very real chance of a Brit winning an AMA SX title for the first time with Dean Wilson. And the Scot could do the business outdoors as well. Can you imagine having a British rider sweep the AMA Lites division? Well that could happen in 2011.

When Tommy's finished up racing SX he's back over in Europe racing MX2 GPs for another shot at the world title. That's another mouth-watering prospect! As is the fact he'll be racing alongside team-mate Max Anstie who's shown amazing speed in between trips to A and E. If Max can keep it on two wheels who knows what will happen? And can Jake Nicholls come out swinging in the GPs this year? No-one wants it more – or works harder for it – than The Reverend...

And it's not just motocross. Jonty Edmunds previews this year's EWC in his column this month so I won't pre-empt him apart from saying Knighter against Ahola could well turn out to be better than any off-road battle anywhere in the world this year.

That's just about it for this month apart from to wish you all a Happy New Year and send everyone at DBR's very, very best wishes to our designer Large Marge – aka The Bear – who tied the knot with the lovely Christina – aka The Beares – at the start of the month.

Mwah! Mwah! Mwah!

Sean

© Andy Wiley

Fiendishly fast Frenchie
Milko Potisek wins at Skeggy

Knighter's got plenty on his plate once the season kicks off with Eddy's X-Treme Enduro and the BSEC coming up fast

© rutgerpaauw.com/Red Bull Photosfiles

NEWSHAWND!

A DEVILISHLY DIRTY DELIVERY OF OFF-ROAD NEWS...

The east coast was the place to be in December apparently as Lincolnshire's premier seaside resort hosted the inaugural running of the Skegness Beach Race. With £1000 prize money up for grabs a top entry of international racers lined up for Sunday's three-hour Main Event that was eventually won by Frenchman Milko Potisek with 49 laps completed.

LPE Kawasaki's new signing Bryan MacKenzie finished second overall some three laps down on the winner while the podium was rounded out by HM Plant Red Bull KTM UK's young gun Nathan Watson. While rider numbers were a little lower than expected a massive crowd of 14,000 spectators came to the beach to see the event – or to find out what that god awful racket was – and so hopefully the Skeggy beach blast will be back.

It wouldn't be the start of a new year without a whole heap of extreme enduro action being chucked our way and 2011 really isn't much different with some wild and wonderful races (in the voice of Ned Gerblansky) coming right for us. With WOR's Tough One being strategically

moved back to **March 13** the first big race of the year will now be Eddy's X-Treme Enduro which roars into life on **January 23** at Tong near Bradford.

A top line-up of UK riders including David Knight, Dougie Lampkin, Graham Jarvis, Tom Sagar, Jonny Walker and – fresh outta the old folks home – former Hell's Gate winner Wayne Braybrook will all take on this event which features two one-hour sprints to decide the outcome. With an awesomely tough, mostly natural circuit plotted around the wooded venue this should be one hell of a race.

This event will also be UK enduro fans' first opportunity to see Dougie Lampkin racing a Gas Gas and it'll certainly be interesting to see how Doug does on more competitive machinery than the Beta bus he's been driving for the past couple of years in extreme enduro action. Of course, by the time you read this Dougie'll have already made his British debut for the Spanish manufacturer at the Sheffield Indoor Trial. To see how he got on there log on to www.dirtbikerider.com where you'll also find the very latest news and results for the 2011 AMA Supercross series.

A couple or so weeks after Eddy's X-Treme Enduro, the Husqvarna British Sprint Enduro Championship kicks off at Saints Well in Powys on **February 12/13**. The 10-round series will run over the course of five weekends this year and after calling in at Saints Well for the opener will also visit Llangrove, Monmouth (March 19/20), Rogers Hill Raceway, Dorset (April 30/May 1), Adstone, Northampton (May 28/29) and finally The Bear's favourite hunting ground Berwyn Leisure Park, Clywd (July 2/3).

While the Elite, Expert and Under 23 classes remain, two new ones have also been added into the mix for 2011 – Clubman and Under 19. All five classes will carry full British championship status with eight rounds from 10 to count towards the final tally. The series has also lowered its lower age limit to 15 enabling youth competitors to give this exciting new form of off-road racing a crack. For more information about this exquisite series log on to www.enduro-sprint.com.

February will also see the British SX series reach its climax with the final two rounds running in

London's O2 on **February 5** and Liverpool's Echo Arena on **February 19**. If you can remember all the way back to the series opener in Belfast you'll recall that it was an absolute barnstormer and the action's likely to come as thick and fast at the final two rounds as well. Tickets for the London round can be found online at www.theo2.co.uk or can be obtained by calling **0844 277 4455** and for Liverpool the details you need are www.echoarena.com and **0844 8000 400**. Make sure you don't miss out.

One rider who's sure to add a little bit of spice to proceedings at Future West's final two indoor meets is Scuba Steve Clarke who's recently signed for Rob Hooper's new Maxxis Suzuki set-up. After getting royally shafted by the Coca Cola corp in 2010 Hoops is back with a bang this year and will be running both Clarkey and Kiwi Kayne Lamont in domestic championship action throughout 2011.

"I'm delighted to announce our return to top-level motocross and especially pleased to come back with such a strong line-up of riders," says Rob. "Steven returns from a four-year stint in the USA where he put in some great results and Kayne joins

us fresh from his first season in Europe where he showed some great speed and talent. One key point for both of these riders is their existing experience with the RM-Z250 which should allow us to hit the ground running."

Another team looking for instant success when the gate drops this year will be PAR Honda. With the CAS team ceasing to operate Neil Prince has hooked up with Paul Rowlands and his new job will not only see him head development of the team's Honda machinery but also work closely with team riders Brad Anderson, Luke Hawkins and Anthony Reville throughout the year.

Off the PAR rider roster meanwhile – but finding a home with Roy Emberson's Samsung Yamaha squad – is Shrewsbury's Ray Rowson. The move to blue will see Ray line up in MX2 on a YZ250F while Kristian Whatley will ride Embo's 450 in the big boy's class.

And we won't have to wait too long to find out how they bond with their new machinery as the Maxxis kicks off at Little Silver on **March 6**. More about that next month...



Supercross is coming to London and Liverpool in February

© Sully



© Ray Archer

Scuba Steve's back in Blighty with Rob Hooper's Maxxis Suzuki team



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Ever since the first handlebars rolled out of their factory in 1969, Renthal have been the benchmark for quality and innovation – and now the same values they apply to their awesome hardware ranges are being applied to a great new line of clothing you can check out at www.renthalapparel.com. Pretty sweet, eh?

To celebrate their new range of apparel we've teamed up with Renthal to offer one lucky winner a swag bag filled with t-shirts and hoodies worth almost £200 – that's a whole load of love for your wardrobe. What you get is a black StackeR hoody, a white RepeateR hoody, men's TubeR Plus t-shirts in yellow, orange and black plus a man's TubeR Deluxe t-shirt in green – and all you need to do to be in with a chance of winning is answer this easy-peasy question...

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BACK IN THE DAY!

A RANDOM TRAWL THROUGH THE
DIRT BIKE RIDER ARCHIVES



January/February 1983:

Truly back in the day stuff, we're talking back in the day when DBR was a bi-monthly – stop giggling at the back – publication and cost a whole 85 pence. Dave Thorpe was your Rider of the Year and elsewhere in this issue we profiled world trials champ Eddy Lejeune, tested the new Honda, Yamaha and Husqvarna MXers and someone called Jack Burnicle did a feature on 'Cheshire Charger' Pete Mathia.



February 2001:

It was 10 years ago that Lawless took over as DBR Editor and what a cracker he kicked off with – Tiny Tone gracing the cover testing the new 250 and 426cc Yamaha thumpers, Warren Edwards shooting his norf and sarf off and an absurdly young looking Wayne Smith aiming to put a troubled season behind him. Let's face it, it was always going to be downhill for Lawless and DBR after such a stellar start...

To trawl through more back issues of DBR hook up to www.dirtbikerider.com and click on the digital vault button – new issues are constantly being added so keep checking back...



THE REVEREND

BACK IN THE SADDLE!

THE ICKY CAST'S OFF, THE NASTY SNOW'S THAWED
AND IT'S TIME FOR JAKE TO COME OUT AND PLAY...

Words by Jake Nicholls Photo by Suttty

Happy New Year to you all – I hope you had a great festive season and ate plenty of roast dinners! I stuck with tradition and ate until it hurt which was good. But I'm not sitting on it, I've worked it off double already so I hope you guys are on it too.

A lot has happened since my last scribbles. I had just got my leg out of plaster when I last wrote. From then I had my air cast on for a week, then I sacked that off as it was annoying me and I could walk already albeit with a 50 Cent-esque limp I'm still running – ha ha. Not! As soon as I took the air cast off I started boxing standing up again and doing some light sparring with the Herd. I also started cycling straight away and using all the gym equipment minus a treadmill and I've just had my head down ever since. Obviously the snow hasn't helped things but we have been lucky compared to people further north – I feel for you guys and Ireland not having water must suck ass...

I haven't got a lot of news on the the MX front at the minute and I won't be riding any proper MX until I get to Josh's place in NZ on January 18. Steve the Holeshoot King drove to KTM UK when the snow had supposedly cleared up and had to park a block away from their HQ due to the depth of the white stuff. He moaned at me but sure enough that evening he rolled up with a sexy little 150SX which I nearly messed my pants over. I'll be totally honest here I am a huge two-stroke man and I'm heavily into the stinking, screaming rippers – I think I really caught the bug when I was 17 riding for Fork Rent Suzuki run by Mark from MVR-D.

In the middle of the season Jason [Dougan] my team-mate and I signed up to do a round of the DEP champs at Landrake, him on a 125 tinker and myself on a 250 smoker kindly lent to us by Meredith Suzuki. I wasn't sure what to expect but I was very excited by the new challenge against the wily old fox that is Mark Eastwood who I think was unbeaten (although maybe Dave Willet beat him a couple times).

The day before the race Ry Thorpe and I drove to Cheddar and tried it out only to realise I had sod all kit with me as it was the Japanese GP the following weekend so most of my stuff was there and the rest of it was with Mark who was elsewhere. So I begged and borrowed some of Luke Hill's anorexic Troy Lee kit and zip-tied a sock in the side of my helmet where I was missing a cheek pad! I got on the track though and ripped it up, it felt like it was the fastest I had ever gone so I was really excited.

I'll interrupt this memory to say I'm sat in my kitchen typing this out and my parents have got Famous and Fearless on. I know it's good exposure for extreme sports etc but my god what a load of crap! Just too much talking! If they changed that it would be all right I reckon. I'm typing this then going to stay round Blu's where I will take my lap top and watch Knighter's DVD as she'll be watching jerk-off TV on MTV.

Anyway, so we got to Landrake and had a blinding day battling with Easty and beating him in one race. I had so much fun and from then on I was made over by two-smokers. So that's probably why I'm heavily into the little 150 – it's sex on wheels! Senor Lawless' write up on her was right albeit his was a XC version but still very similar. If I was a general Herder riding for fun I'd have one of them any day of the week.

But I'm well excited to get back on the ol' SX-F, she's gonna feel like a right honey after thrashing the smoker about. I waited until after Christmas to ride it as the weather was so gnarly cold and there was still snow about which wouldn't have been a good mix. Boxing Day was good fun as I went to my mate Legget's clay shoot up the road – it was a right laugh and man did I get through some shells. Hell of a day! The next day it was back to training on my new hardtail that Hope built for me which is seriously pimping. Then finally the frost started thawing out and I got up in my woods and rode for the first time in two months since I broke my leg.

It was awesome and the next day I went back in there but this time with some snippers out of me ol' ma's garden toolshed and put some new loops in. Got a couple of us going round and next thing I know we had a two-and-a-half minute enduro loop with logs, roots, whoops and a bit of MX in it. Ended up riding for about three hours and have done it nearly every day since. I've got to admit it's made me think how I would love to do a hare and hounds race or one of Eddy's GBXC races as I love it.

I did an enduro in 2008 and loved it and something like the American GNCC or WORCS looks mega as it's very much still racing. I texted Knighter and told him. Hopefully when I get back from NZ all going well I can get over and ride with him a bit.

That's it for now, I should have some more interesting scribbles next month. Sorry if this was a bit of a ranger column – now crack on and get in the gym ya fat gits...

Go hard #45

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BLOOD SWEAT AND GEARS

Welcome, race fans, to a brand new column and a brand new year. As I write this from the palatial Blood, Sweat and Gears Towers, I am pleased to look across my desk and say that from where I'm sitting my colleague Ralph appears to have somehow managed to put on even more weight than I have. Trust me, this is no mean feat. I'm sure that a lot of you are in a similar situation.

And I suspect a lot of you are intending to join gyms and begin training regimens that would be the envy of our 2012 Olympic athletes in order to win that all-important club championship as part of your New Year's resolutions. Good luck with that! I, on the other hand, have developed an all-new riding style. One where the extra ballast around my midriff actually propels me through corners at an eye-watering rate of knots. You should see the look of fear in the spectators' eyes as they scatter when they see me hurtling down the hill towards them, haunted by the knowledge that even the top factory bikes do not have brakes capable of stopping such mass.

And that's just the benefits for motocross. In enduros the extra bulk is proving even more of an advantage. No more tight woodland trails for me – any intrusive shrubbery can now easily be flattened with the ease and grace of a rampant water buffalo hot on the scent of his next mate. Queues and bottlenecks have become a thing of the past. By simply standing on the toes of the rider next to you, you can cause him to topple your fellow riders like a line of dominoes, allowing clear and uninterrupted access to the trail for yourself. The mountainous dunes found in beach races – when hit at just the right velocity – can create an explosion of sand leaving a tunnel for you to heroically torpedo your way through, Dambusters style!

So don't be fooled by magazine articles telling you that strict diet and training is the key. The smart money is on feeding like there's no tomorrow. If the top riders have done their homework you should expect to see a 25-stone Antonio Carlini lining up on his factory steed – now resembling a monkey bike – in fear of his machine becoming engulfed where the sun no longer shines.

So take my advice and reach for another mince pie – because flab is fab and feed equals speed.

Until next month, ride safe.

Oh, I nearly forgot – this month sees the last show of the current series of Blood Sweat and Gears. So tune in tomorrow (that's January 15) for the final round of the NORA quad championships. Then we'll be gearing up for the new series which starts towards the end of March so stay glued to this page to find out all about it. In the meantime, be sure to keep checking our website at bloodsweatandgears.tv for more information!

BLOOD SWEAT & GEARS is on the Extreme Sports Channel (Sky 419/Virgin 527) every Saturday. Check listings for details.

CROCKSTAR

MISTLETOE AND WINE!

ACTUALLY, FORGET THE MISTLETOE – AND THE WINE FOR THAT MATTER – BUT CAPTAIN MORGAN, WARM WHISKEY AND LOTS OF DIRTY GREAT BOGS WILL DO THE TRICK...

Words by **Gordon Everhard** Photo by **Sutty**

May I wish a Happy New Year to you all. My recent period has been good in several ways. I have had some very positive news to celebrate and have spent most of the last month working on that news. Right now I would love to write all about it here in my column but I think that I am not in a confirmed enough position to be making any announcements in the media. Don't worry – nobody is pregnant due to any action I've been performing!

I am in fact working very hard to complete a deal which will allow me to race in 2011 in the Maxxis and Red Bull championships. I am very hopeful that I will be able to create a set-up where I can concentrate on doing my role as a rider. Recent years I have not had 100 per cent of my time available to dedicate to being a full-time racer so if I can get this deal completed then I hope to be away from that problem. More time to train, practice, rest and travel will certainly be a welcome change for me.

I had another birthday since last writing. I'm now 32 and don't feel any older than I did when I was 21. Weird and worrying really. I don't care to be honest and I'm lucky not to as some people that I see act as if the sands of time are running through their hands. Panic living as if time's running out. In terms of my body condition I actually believe I'm coming into my prime strength era.

Bike riding has been minimal last month. There haven't been any supercross events and I have stayed off the trials bikes which I would have always used in the winter months. The only handlebar time that went down was a spot of bog-hopping with Meeke and McGuire and a very cheeky snow show in the middle of the night after coming back from celebrating my birthday. Of course with the persuasion of my mate Captain Morgan we all decided that the fresh snow fall deserved some fully grown men to get their toys out for a little late night fun.

With the biggest tractor inner tubes inflated to double hard, a tow rope tied to the back of a bike, body laid chest down and holding on like you've never held on in your life before, all you had to do was stay on and hope the rider on the bike didn't crash. I nearly towed my mate all the way into town as I knew he wouldn't jump off without me stopping. My plan was fluffed when we came to the first hill and the rear tyre wouldn't grip and we span to a stop.

There were no cars or traffic on the road as the snow was really deep due to a heavy downfall in a short space of time. Only one guy got a wee bit hurt. He went through the hedge at the bottom of my lane at quite a rate of speed on. Only bruising and torn clothes. It was very funny at the time.

The bog-hopping was good too. Just three of us arranged to go and it kindly stayed dry overhead for

both days. The ground was still frozen on some of the bogs up on the high mountains but no problems occurred. As usual we covered over 100 miles off-road each day. We did run into a little bit of a lack of daylight issue though on day one. As we were having such a good time on the terrain we had freshly found, we ended up a good few miles away from our base when it had become completely dark. The other two lads had proper enduro bikes with legal lights, I on the other hand didn't. Coming home we stuck to the roads and that results in your body getting frozen as it isn't getting worked and the cold air from your pace blows clean through you with a bite.

Meeke knew the area and suggested going for a hot whiskey in a pub we were passing. The idea was to go in for one to get warmed up and then shoot on home to get out of our wet gear and off the bikes finally. Arriving at the pub we just parked the bikes up outside and went straight in to sit round the blazing open fire. As you may be wondering, yes, we were plastered from head to toe in Donegal mud and bog. But the form up in that part of Ireland is a wee bit different to the rest of the world. We had no money either and agreed to come back later that night to pay for our drinks.

Well...the just one drink got a bit extended to the point of Meeke's girlfriend ringing to ask where we were as it was 9 o'clock and our taxi to go out for dinner was sitting on the driveway! Oops! We left the pub and rode the 10-minute trip home. We didn't race each other or anything to see whose bike was fastest in the dark, on the road, well-oiled.

We got washed and changed and back down the road in the patient taxi to pay our debt. I nearly choked when I found out we had ran up a tab of 63 Euros. We were only calling in for one! At least all our gear was bone dry for the next day as we'd sat round the fire for that long putting the world to rights.

Christmas was fantastic and I enjoyed some much-needed quality time with my family and good friends. My dad was a very heavy smoker for over 50 years and he's been a non-smoker now for four months. He's on good form and had the banter flying high over the festive period. He plays in a silver band and raises funds for charity playing all over Belfast in hotels, restaurants, bars, pubs, shopping centres, Christmas markets and the like. My mum goes with them on Christmas Eve and helps collect money. They all get merry and we went along too for a while. It was ace seeing him in that setting.

I'll be fit to announce my plans for 2011 in next month's issue. I can't wait. Believe me.

**Bob Hannah urges his factory Suzuki
- complete with Boyesen Link rear
suspension - to victory at the 1986
US 250 GP at Unadilla**



EYVINDBOYSEN

A TRIBUTE TO MX'S MASTER INNOVATOR...

Motocross lost one of its greatest innovators with the passing in November of Eyvind Boyesen who succumbed to cancer the day before he was due to be inducted into the AMA's Motorcycle Hall of Fame in Las Vegas. He was 68.

Gentle, charming and unfailingly polite, Eyvind's regal demeanour reflected an ancestry that dated back to the first King of Norway in the Ninth Century.

Born in Oslo to an engineering dad who had a flow instrumentation shop in the city, he got hooked on motocross and mechanised for a top national rider before being sent by his parents at 17 to join his elder brother in Philadelphia and further his education. There he met Marcia. They married in Norway before returning to the States where Boyesen graduated as an engineer and worked initially for a company that 'did stuff for NASA'.

Unable to stay away from motorcycles, he began racing a Maico in 1965 but found himself dissatisfied with the bike's tendency to stall under load. "I was a very precise rider and this was bothersome to me," he smiled when recounting the tale to me many years later. "I concluded that reed valves were a good solution. They had only previously been used on chainsaws and some go-kart engines." After initial experiments with single-stage reeds,

Eyvind came up with dual-stage reed valves, patented his invention in 1972 and established Boyesen Engineering. The increase in engine efficiency and power output was so impressive that by 1977 all the major manufacturers had taken out licences with Boyesen and were using his reed valves!

His business, based at Lenhartsville, north of Philadelphia, also became heavily involved with major US car manufacturers like General Motors and Chrysler as well as speedboats and bikes. But he never stopped racing and developed the Boyesen Link rear suspension system that was used in the mid '80s by, among others, American legend Bob Hannah and Max Anstie's dad Mervyn. Hannah loved it so much he fitted the Boyesen Link to his factory Suzuki for his assault on the 1986 US 250 Grand Prix. "Bob was at the end of his career and wanted one last chance at Unadilla even though he wasn't in good shape," explained Eyvind. "Our suspension had much more travel than he thought possible but when he tested it he was amazed. 'Man, I thought I was done but you've given me a new life. Now I'm starting over again!'" Hannah triumphed in a dramatic last lap victory over Johnny O'Mara's Honda to claim the only GP win of his extraordinary career!

Unfortunately, Marcia fell ill and with Eyvind's time understandably diverted the Boyesen Link was shelved, though Stefan Everts and his chief

technician Jan De Groot secretly tested an updated version on his factory KX250 Kawasaki early in 1994. De Groot had already used Boyesen's rad valves and float bowls in Greg Albertyn's 1992 and 1993 world championship winning Hondas and Everts would use them to clinch Kawasaki's long awaited maiden world title in 1995. Boyesen was also working closely with Yamaha and Kawasaki in the US and with Honda on the grand prix circuits. And he never lost his love of racing. "I have over 40 patents and have developed a lot of things that could be more lucrative in markets other than motocross but I don't have the same passion for those things," he confessed. "Motocross is what I love. I don't think there is any sport which requires as much diverse thinking and reacting. I like to compete. I enjoy it a lot. I'm very competitive!"

As concise a rider as he was thinker and engineer, Eyvind finished runner-up in the 1992 vets' world championship at Perris Raceway and repeated that result as recently as 2004 at Glen Helen as well as winning the Over 60 world title in 2002. He and Marcia, who recorded albums for Lyric Soul Productions, celebrated 47 years of marriage last May and Eyvind, a loving and devoted father, leaves behind seven kids and 15 grandchildren. He was quite simply as kind, affable and wise a man as you could ever wish to meet. It is a privilege to have known him.

Jack Burnicle

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SWORDY

HOT TO TROT!

AFTER A RELAXING FESTIVE BREAK THE FACTORY CCM RIDER CAN'T WAIT TO GET BACK ON IT...

Words by **Stephen Sword** Photo by **Sutty**

Let me start by saying happy New Year to everyone and that I hope you all had a great Christmas too and ate and drank far too much!

December started with hard training for me down in Devon with Dave. I was hoping to get on the bike a few times before Christmas but due to the snow I only managed to get out once. I felt fit on the bike but had a bit of arm-pump which is normal for me at this point of the year. I've missed riding as we've just focused on fitness so not to burn out on the bike mid-season. So although I only managed one day of riding it was mega getting back on it. Training has been hard and I have been pushing myself as I am determined to start next season strong, fit and 100 per cent ready to win. This time last year I had Epstein Barr without knowing it and was in such a different place mentally and physically so I'm feeling confident to win and get the results I want.

It was Jodie's birthday last month so we went to London for the night. It was amazing – we went on the London Eye and ate in a Japanese restaurant where they cook in front of you. Suited me perfectly – delicious and very healthy. We took a walk to Covent Garden and stayed in a hotel where we had a massage and spa. As you can imagine the missus thought I was great, well until we woke up on the Sunday morning – her birthday morning – and I forgot it was her birthday so put on Sky Sports and started to watch the football. This went on until her sister called her to wish her a happy birthday – it didn't go down well. Just my bloody luck. She forgave me after about two hours!

For Christmas we went up to Scotland to see my family and had a great time – open fire, glass of wine and great food. What more could you want? Ayrton was spoilt rotten and loved the fact that he had every toy you could imagine. My brother brought him a car so that kept him occupied for the rest of the time we were up there. The only problem was we couldn't get it home as the car was packed with the dog as well. So he had to leave it up there for now

which hasn't gone down great! He stayed at my brother's house for the night so was spoilt rotten by them while we got a whole night's sleep and a lie in. That was the best Christmas gift ever. My Auntie Karen looked after us so well that we didn't want to leave as we were so chilled so thanks for that. It took us over five hours to get home which was stressful – especially as Ayrton was awake the whole way so Jodie was sat in the back between him and the dog keeping them both occupied. I was glad I was the driver!

I got back to training two days after Christmas and for New Year we went up to stay at Jodie's sister's who is pregnant and was due Christmas Day but was still waiting. Her husband was not able to drink so it was going to be a nice relaxed evening of food and few drinks. Jodie kept saying that when Ayrton was in bed she was going to get wasted! Anyway, we put him down at seven and made some food, then at 9.30 the missus goes up to bed sober – so much for her crazy drinking night. Half-an-hour later her sister goes up to bed and it's just Nick and I. It was good in a way as we watched what we wanted for a change. I stayed up to see the New Year in then went to bed (I must be old).

It was nice not waking up with a major hangover for a change on New Year's Day. Especially as Jodie's family were all getting together. It was a lovely day and I have a feeling that 2011 is going to be a good year. I'm #2 this year and cannot wait to get started so roll on March for the first British. Also, I'm staying with Fox and Oakley which is great.

I've been able to get out on my bike a few times already and with each day feeling better. I'm wanting to get on the bike as much as possible now so I'm bike fit. No matter how fit you are with training you really need to be bike fit – especially if your New Year's resolution is win, win, win!

Have a good month and once again Happy New Year...

Braaaap #2

DUSTDEVILS!

THE 2011 DAKAR RALLY KICKS OFF IN ARGENTINA AND MARC COMA CURRENTLY LEADS THE WAY...

As DBR heads to the printers the battle for the lead in the 2011 Dakar Rally is heating up nicely with Spaniard Marc Coma leading the way after four tortuous stages. The Spanish KTM star hasn't had it all his own way though as Portugal's Ruben Faria and three-time Dakar winner Cyril Despres have each won a stage too. However, Coma's won the last two duels in the desert and currently sits on a small two-second lead ahead of Despres while Aprilia's Francisco Lopez is third, 20 minutes and 10 seconds behind Cyril. British interest in the rally lies with Welsh wonder Craig Bounds who is currently 46th place overall in the bike division. With three-quarters of the rally still to run absolutely anything can happen so tune in next month to see who comes out on top of this epic battle.



© Marcelo Maragni/Red Bull Photofiles

Aprilia's Francisco Lopez holds down third



Marc Coma's moved to the head of the pack

© Marcelo Maragni/Red Bull Photofiles

After four stages three-time
Dakar winner Cyril Despres
sits two seconds behind
team-mate Marc Coma



MAX POWER

SWINGER!

MAX HAS COME UP WITH A GREAT WAY OF KILLING TIME UNTIL HIS NEIGHBOURS ARE AWAKE AND HE CAN START TURNING LAPS...

Words by Max Anstie Photo by Sarah Gutierrez

As I was counting down the last few days in the UK the NEC motorcycle show was going on and the boss over at Kawasaki – that's Steve Guttridge – told me to come down and do some interviews. So I had a good day representing Kawasaki, rapping on the stage and singing Justin Bieber songs.

Then 12 hours later I hopped on a plane back to California where I received my exam results and found out that I had passed everything – that was a relief. Next for my schooling is a few more college entrance exams in January and February and some normal schoolwork until June, then I can go down and collect my big cape and cool pointy hat that I have only seen in movies. Sweet! I have also had a few agents over in Hollywood speak to me and I have to go to some massive audition with Selena Gomez and Miley Cyrus – yeah, going to be totally awesome!

I actually got on the karaoke machine yesterday that I bought my dad and Zoey for Christmas and started busting out some Robbie and Enrique. Jordan Booker – my best buddy growing up – and I performed an Eminem duet and our dance moves are definitely JB standard. I am feeling really prepared now for my big debut in Hollywood.

So back in reality it's a new year and 2011 is going to be good. It's the first of the month today and I had a way cool day jumping some massive triples at home, playing with my new RC car I got for Christmas and smashing some golf balls. I actually used to think golf was rubbish until Grandpa Frosty (Dev's dad) came out and showed me the proper way to hit a ball because I had been doing it more like Happy Gilmore. I have started now to smash balls from the deck miles onto the track and it's actually pretty cool. I don't think I could go to a golf course yet but, nevertheless, until the neighbours wake up I need to do something a little less loud than going through that nice sand and doing some bar dragging.

So my best buddy Jordan is out here now doing some training and getting ready for the GPs next year. Also, my French mate Ange' is out here working hard and it's pretty cool

because when he came here he couldn't speak a word of English. I had to use Google translator for a week but now, surprisingly, I speak a little French and he speaks a little English.

Ange' and I were driving back from Pro Circuit last week and the LAPD were right on me for ages and then the dreaded blue lights were on and the police were at my window. So I got out and opened a can of whupass on them and...no, ha ha...as if! My registration was out of date so nothing cool really happened but it still made me feel like a hardnut being pulled over.

The work starts again on Monday. I have just been writing down all my plans to prepare myself the best I can for next season. Yeah, 2010 was not the best year but I believe that it has made me stronger and given me the chance to ride for the best MX2 team out there. I have a chance to be world champion so I will be as ready as I can to do battle. It's going to be cool racing back in England – I haven't raced back home outdoors properly since I was on 65s doing the KWS and Matchams winter series.

I don't really want to go and watch supercross next week. I know I would win races with how things went last year but it's like if I wait and get myself totally prepared for the GPs and go and do a good job it would make life a lot easier than racing SX this year and being rushed for the GPs. I don't know, I just hate watching!

On another note, I haven't been able to talk to my little bro since I was in the UK and that was a month ago. So I missed him over Christmas and the New Year which was a bummer because he has an RC car and I wanted to tell him that when I come back I can race him. If any of you guys see him, tell him big Max is going to be back soon to do some serious racing.

I have pretty much given up on the whole crashing business so at least that's good. I figured if you just keep it pinned and don't crash you have a good chance of winning.

Hope everyone had a good Christmas and New Year...

Max



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GOLDEN OLDIES!

WITH MARC DE REUVER LAID UP IN HOSPITAL WITH NO COMPUTER ACCESS WE TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE A LOOK BACK THROUGH THE LAST TWO YEARS OF PRO PROBE AND SELECT SOME OF OUR FAVOURITE BITS OF Q N' A GOLD...

Compiled by JP O'Connell Pic by Suttly

Q: Is the animosity between you and Chad Reed 100 per cent or is there a bit of media hype going on?
James Stewart: "Nope, we 100 per cent dislike each other. No smoke and mirrors on that!"

Q: Would dying my hair ginger make me faster?
Gordon Crockard: "It would if you genuinely believed you were ginger and felt unaccepted by society for being uncool due to gingeriness. Self-esteem being low drives the ambitious to be better in other ways they are in control of. Being ginger means you get bullied, that makes you tough which is a gift that helps in MX. Just think like a ginger and avoid having to look like one!"

Q: What does it feel like to go from #34 to #24 to #4 in the world in such a short space of time?

Shaun Simpson: "Actually, I went #44, #34, #24, #4 – ha ha – so, yeah, it's been quite a pattern and well four years is not so long but it took a lot of hard work. I think I'm one of those guys like Coppins that has taken time to come into the spotlight. Other guys can just come in straight away and I think it's not a bad thing but I feel maybe I need to work harder at it? I'm just not too sure what the next number in the sequence is..."

Q: If you raced Valentino Rossi at supermoto who would win?

Tony Cairoli: "I raced Valentino's bike a few times. I think we can fight for the victory both in supermoto. Last year I organise a race at my home track in Sicily and MotoGP riders Marco Melandri and Andrea Dovizioso raced together with us on a motocross bike. We had so much fun! I know Valentino like to ride motocross as well and all three they are pretty good motocross riders."

Q: My dad says he thinks you beat Ricky Carmichael – is he right?

David Vuillemin: "Yes, your dad is right. I beat Ricky a few times in the early 2000s in SX and MX. We had a good battle for the SX championship back in 2002. RC is, by the way, the rider I respect the most!"

Q: Have you ever had a full on punch-up on the track?

Ryan Hughes: "Yeah, two punch-ups plus a few scuffles. Doug Henry T-boned me and we went down, we started punching each other before wrestling right in the middle of the track. The second incident was a

week after I returned from a broken leg, Mike Brown T-boned me on the practice track – he just stood there while I was punching him! I don't go looking for trouble and a bit of bar banging is fine but when it gets dangerous then I have to take control. That's what passion does and when I pull on my helmet don't f**k with me!"

Q: You tend to get a lot of s*** on certain message boards – do you read it and if so does it have an adverse effect on you?

Billy MacKenzie: "Lol! No, not anymore. I remember way back in the day when I first found out about the message boards I used to get pissed off with anything anyone said but then I got wise to what was actually going on. It's all just absolute bulls***! No-one knows what the hell is going on, it's all just gossip or Chinese whispers, so now I just add fuel to the fire and wind people up if I ever go on. It's just ridiculous and funny! I suppose in some way it might have had an effect because instead of taking everything to heart and going out to prove everyone wrong I just ignore it and do the best for me."

Q: Some people refer to me as a 'northern monkey' – has this happened to you and if so how do you deal with it?

Brad Anderson: "I'm proud to be a northern monkey – better than a southern fairy, eh!"

Q: Having been on the circuit for so long is there a part of you that is now looking forward to being able to hit into doughnuts, barbecued snags, killer steaks and a few tinnies whenever you feel like it?

Josh Coppins: "Yeah, that will be good! I'll be honest with you though, I pretty much eat what I want these days but I don't drink in the season or much at all really. In 2009 I had a special diet and I stuck to it, I got my body fat down to seven per cent and looked like a mean lean machine! But I felt s***! I got tired and I wasn't happy so this year and all prior to '09 I eat what I want whenever I want but I'm not a pig – I have always eaten decent food."

Q: Of all of your championships which is the most precious to you and why?

Dave Thorpe: "Every one is precious but the '89 championship is sweet because the '87 and '88

championships got away through injury! So to come back again and win made it special."

Q: How much has your life changed since you were invited to be a DBR columnist?

Jake Nicholls: "It's been a total turnaround, I feel like a celebrity now and I get annoying texts once a month from a northern cheese ranger. Ha ha! I enjoy writing about what I get up to. My English teacher always said if I was interested I'd be fine as I would write nine pages or so if it was about MX but three or four lines if it was about Shakespeare."

Q: If you could win only one championship in your career which would it be – MX1, MX2, AMA outdoors, SX etc – and why?

Nev Bradshaw: "I would say MX1 world champ has to take the cake. You have to be a man to go 15 rounds of the world championship, against the best in the world, doing two 40-minute motos every weekend on a 450."

Q: Everyone knows you've ridden Kawasakis all of your life – why did you decide to go to Yamaha?

James Stewart: "I was ready for a change and a fresh new feel and Yamaha gave me the programme and the backing that I was looking for – Kawasaki never called me either!"

Q: Who's had more injuries – you or the Bionic Man?

Gordon Crockard: "I have broken 31 bones – two toes, two legs, six ribs, two fingers, one wrist, one arm, one elbow, four vertebrae, 11 collarbones and one nose. I dislocated my AC joint in my shoulder. I tore my ACL in my knee and had reconstruction. The clutch lever pierced through my cheek in a crash and I had 21 stitches inside and out to repair the hole. A roost rock knocked my front tooth out. Concussions? Jeez! I burst my spleen and had it removed. Haematoma on my back twice. So not much has happened to me and I'd say the Bionic Man gets it."

NEXTMONTH ELLIOTT BANKS-BROWNE >>

Normal service will be resumed next month when DB Racing's Elliott Banks-Browne will field your questions so send 'em in to us at dbproprobe@googlemail.com



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DBR: Who would you like to play you in a film of your life?
KR: "Okay, crazy question! I think probably Vin Diesel."
AT: "I think it would be Wentworth Miller, the guy from Prison Break."

DBR: When did you last clean an air filter?
KR: "Whoa! An air filter! Must be a year ago maybe!"
AT: "Not so long ago. I think last winter I cleaned maybe one. I think!"

DBR: What was the last lie that you told and who was it to?
KR: "About three weeks ago to a friend of mine, I can't tell you what it was though."
AT: "I'm not normally a liar, in fact I can't even remember the last lie I told."

DBR: Could you check your own valve clearances?
KR: "I can do some of the easier things you know like tightening a bolt, putting fuel in, removing plastics, adjusting the chain. But nothing inside the engine."
AT: "Yeah, for sure. I injured my elbow and was unable to ride for a year – my dad has a workshop so I worked on building my own bikes."

DBR: Something you eat that you know you shouldn't?
KR: "For sure chips and pizza. At the weekends then I eat healthy but through the week it's not such a problem."
AT: "Swiss cheese! It's a hard cheese that you can melt over potatoes and stuff – it's really good but I try to only eat it in the winter."

DBR: You're in second and on the leader's rear wheel – do you take him out in the last corner for the win?
KR: "I wouldn't say that I'd take him out but I would try absolutely everything to get past him – hard but fair!"
AT: "Of course, yeah, I think so. Maybe if it was Ken then it would be different, a good clean block-pass perhaps?"



THE EX-TEKA TWO!

THIS MONTH FORMER TEAM-MATES KEN ROCZEN AND ARNAUD TONUS
SQUARE UP TO SEE WHO'S GOT THE BIGGEST BACK WHEELS...

Interviews and photo by JP O'Connell

DBR: What is the highlight of your career so far?
KR: "I think it was last year when I won the GP at Teutschenthal."
AT: "I think the des Nations in '07 – it was my first time there, I was just 16 and I rode with Ricky Carmichael and everyone. It was a really good moment for me."

DBR: What car do you drive?
KR: "I don't have a licence yet – all I have is a 125cc motorcycle."
AT: "A Suzuki Grand Vitara."

DBR: And if money were no object?
KR: "I think I'd have an Audi R8 as a fun car and probably a VW as a normal car. With VW you can have a lot of power in a compact car."
AT: "I'm not really all about the cars but I think maybe a Mercedes CLS would be good."

DBR: Have you ever blamed a poor result on a non-existent mechanical issue?
KR: "No, never, I'd be more likely to say it was me if the bike was the problem."
AT: "No, I'm not like that, I am very honest with me and the team. If there is something wrong with the bike then I'll say it."

DBR: If you could change anything about yourself what would it be?
KR: "I think it would be to remove some of the softness I have. When I am riding I take a little bit too much care of the other riders, you know? Sometimes this is good but sometimes I need to have a bit more aggression towards the others."
AT: "To be more mentally focussed – sometimes I will make silly small mistakes."

DBR: If you could meet any person – alive or dead – who would it be?

KR: "[Laughing] Jennifer Aniston!"
AT: "I have always been a huge fan of Ricky Carmichael so to meet him would be great."

DBR: If you could have any superpower – flying, invisibility, x-ray vision etc – for a week what would it be?
KR: "Flying, no, hang on – I'd like to be able to do real magic, the second Harry Potter or something!"
AT: "I would like to be able to click my fingers and appear anywhere I want in the world."

DBR: If you were shipwrecked on an island what three things would you want with you?
KR: "A girlfriend, maybe a normal friend...no scrub that...let's just stick with my girlfriend, my phone and the internet."
AT: "I think my bike, my girlfriend and my family would be good."

DBR: What's your most prized possession?
KR: "My family."
AT: "My family although materially it would be a big painting that a friend of mine did of me riding."

DBR: Do you Google yourself?
KR: "Yeah, I do, just to see if there's something new – even in YouTube I put my name in to see if there's any new videos. I don't think it's a big problem, it doesn't mean I'm stuck up or anything!"
AT: "I tried to find some pictures once but now I have my own website so I don't need to!"

DBR: Blonde or brunette?
KR: "Brunette maybe, it's difficult to say because if I say something wrong now maybe the next girl who's coming thinks she is the wrong colour and won't say hello!"
AT: "Brunette, definitely."

DBR: One thing about your riding style that you'd like to improve?
KR: "This sounds s**t but I think I have everything I need to be the best. Actually to be able to put one fast lap down would be good – I'm not a one-lap rider."
AT: "I'd like to improve my speed through tight corners."

DBR: What's your favourite film?
KR: "Probably Never Back Down – I think it's also called The Fighters."
AT: "The Book of Eli was a really cool film."

DBR: What's your most annoying habit?
KR: "[Laughing] Talking s**t until it gets really annoying!"
AT: "[Laughing] Maybe when I am singing!"

DBR: What's the worst motocross related decision you've made during your career?
KR: "I don't think there has been anything – not yet anyway."
AT: "I've yet to make one, I have always worked with my family so it's always been good. Maybe it's yet to come?"

DBR: If you had to permanently give up either the internet, mobile phone or TV which would it be?
KR: "That's a difficult choice but I think it would have to be the TV."
AT: "TV I think."

DBR: Something about yourself that nobody else knows?
KR: "Many people think that I'm stuck up but when I'm with friends I'm a really relaxed guy. I don't live and breathe motocross – sometimes during the week I can almost forget that it's what I do."
AT: "I love tattoos and have a work in progress that reaches from my shoulder to my elbow."

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INDOOR MOTORCYCLE RACING



Graeme Irwin's looking forward to getting his hands on 100 extra cubes this season

BRING IT ON!

THE TENSION'S BUILDING IN IRELAND AND OUR MAN MILLS CAN'T WAIT FOR IT ALL TO KICK OFF – EASY TIGER!

Words by Stevie Mills Photo by Suttly

There is more than a little anticipation in the air around the Emerald Isle and against the backdrop of a very much depleted economy the realisation is that Irish racing talent is hot to trot and looking forward to a successful season ahead.

Phil Neill is better known these days for being the driving force for Suzuki's UK efforts in both BSB and international road races. Heading up the ultra-successful Relentless Suzuki by TAS Performance racing team, 2011 will see Philip returning to motocross. It was no big surprise that Suzuki looked across the Irish Sea when they decided to restructure the base from which to launch a serious attack on the various UK MX championships. After a two-hour meeting at TAS HQ I can tell you that Phil is really looking forward to – in his words – “coming back to his roots”.

As an ex Irish and Ulster MX champ and well-seasoned British MX 125cc series competitor, Philip is no stranger around the UK racing paddock and a good few of the current circuits being a top five finisher on more than one occasion in British championship races in the past. I'd fully intended an in-depth Blarney look into this new and exciting race team but while steeped in racing history it's also at present covered with a cloaking device which prevents me spilling the beans on a mouth-watering line-up of riders and sponsors.

What I can confirm, at this point, is that they will have a rider line-up in both MX1 and MX2 classes, run Polisport plastics and Risk Racing products and their bikes will maintain a 'just-new' look care of Pro-Clean. And there may even be a

hint of international spice in the offing – watch this space!

Graeme Irwin called in to say 'hi' and 'bye' as Mr Ever Smiling's heading off to Spain to dial in his new HM Plant Red Bull KTM UK machinery for a full-blown shot at the British and world MX1 championships. Personally, I think MX1 is a great call from R Dog – that's Graeme's pet name for team boss Roger Magee. The 350cc KTM will smooth out G's riding style and an early jump in with the big guns will not phase this young star at all. I wish I could bottle the enthusiasm, energy and talent that Graeme exudes. This kid is high on life and living the dream – here's hoping he can keep to the programme and show us what he's capable of come the end of the season!

As usual the MRA's announcement of the Ulster 2011 race format received mixed reviews. Damned if you do and damned if you don't – you're never going to please everybody all of the time. Personally, I think that they have shown some foresight in having both MX1 and MX2 Ulster championships on the same day. This will take a lot of financial pressure off people trying to compete in a further six events throughout the year. Although I can't for the life of me get my head around the decision to invite entries from both Grade A and B for the MX2 championship – and only Grade A riders are allowed to enter the Premier class championship!

Inviting entries from A and B riders will guarantee full line-ups throughout the season as between 60-80 riders will ride a timed practice to qualify 40 riders through to the startgate. With some Grade A riders choosing to race MX2 only,

coupled with the usual injuries and dwindling of riders as the season moves into the summer months, I can foresee the Premier Ulster championship running 14-rider line-ups come July which is not good for clubs, sponsors, riders or the general image of Ulster championship MX.

Multi Ulster and Irish MX1 and MX2 champion Wayne Garrett will join Darren Wilson's Moto One Irn Bru KTM team for a crack at the Maxxis and Red Bull Pro Nationals in 2011. Wayne will still ride TSR KTM's for his domestic championship challenges. With injuries keeping him from collecting much silverware in 2010, Wayne is determined that 2011 will see him back where he belongs – at the top of his game.

Tommy Merton rejoins the Watt Kawasaki squad to defend his MX1 Irish championship title that he wrenched from Robert Hamilton in the final race of the 2010 season. Disappointed as Robert may have been on the day, it would have been hard to stop the reigning Ulster MX1 and MX2 champion from smiling all the way back to the seaside village of Portavogie.

One top racer glad to see the back of 2010 is Watt GOMX KTM rider Richard Bird. The ex MX2 champ sat out most of last season with a thumb injury but is now back in the gym and pumping towards a return to racing. Richard is also celebrating his engagement to his lovely girlfriend Scorcha Laverty. It must be something in the water as Wayne Garrett also popped the question to his girlfriend Sarah Bickerstaff just before Christmas. Congrats to you all...

Stevie



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ANTICIPATION!

WE MAY SAY IT EVERY YEAR BUT THE NEW CHAMPIONSHIP SEASON IS SHAPING UP TO BE A CRACKER...

Words and photo by Jonty Edmunds

Cast your mind back to the start of any one of the past 10 years and I'll bet that not once was the new sporting season ushered in with anything other than enthusiasm and optimism.

Reading that 'this year's going to be s**t' or 'there's no way this year's going to be as good as last year' simply never happens. We're always optimistic that the new will be better than the old. I guess it's human nature but are we right to expect every new season to be better and more exciting than the last?

More often than not I reckon we are. Part of what makes all motorsport great is the pre-season anticipation, the uncertainty and mystery that precedes the competitive season that lies ahead. The looking forward to is almost as enjoyable as the doing for many. Even when it's not obvious why the new season will deliver more we rarely stop believing that it will.

When it comes to the 2011 Enduro World Championship there's plenty to look forward to. In fact I'd go as far as to say the series has all the makings of a stand-out year. Whereas the 2010 championship under-delivered due largely to the early collapse of the Antoine Meo vs Johnny Aubert fight for the Enduro 1 title, this year's series has a lot going for it.

Juha Salminen's return to the Enduro 1 class is going to be worth keeping an eye on. It might have been a while since the seven-time world champ claimed championship glory – and Juha might be a lot closer to the end of his career than he is to the start of it – but the Finn is, well, one of only a handful of riders you'd put money on winning a championship. Whether he'll be able to do it in 2011 remains to be seen but if I

were a betting man I wouldn't put my money too far away from Mr Salminen.

What makes Juha's return to the E1 class all the more interesting is the fact that he's doing it on the bike, of sorts, that topped the class in 2010 – Husqvarna's TE250. Juha is a known lover of horsepower so down-sizing from a 450 to a 250 won't be without its challenges for Salminen. But as a rider that can adjust to new machinery better than pretty much any other, if anyone can do it then Juha can.

The Enduro 2 class will feature just one world champion – Antoine Meo, last year's E1 title winner. Moving up to the Blue Ribbon category on Husqvarna's TE310 machine, Antoine will face seriously tough competition. Firstly, there's Johnny Aubert who will race the highly anticipated enduro version of KTM's hugely successful 350cc four-stroke. Secondly, there'll be Ivan Cervantes on his 250cc two-stroke Gas Gas. Three very different riders on three very different bikes all wanting to win every bit as much as each other. And backed by three different manufacturers all equally as keen to come out on top.

The second coming together of Meo and Aubert means that the battle that failed to materialise in 2010 gets another chance. Both mounted on 300-and-something cc bikes, both riders and their respective teams won't be happy with anything less than the E2 title. Throw into the mix Cervantes aboard his Gasser smoker and Husaberg new boy Pierre Renet and the E2 class certainly doesn't look like it's going to be dull.

What's going to make the battle for the Enduro 3 title so interesting is the fact that the

sport's most successful and consistent rider in recent years – Mika Ahola – is stepping up into the class that's well and truly owned by David Knight. More than just being two of the most successful riders in the EWC today, both come armed with an arsenal of skills that have seen them join an elite group of riders that can be relied upon to deliver winning results no matter where and no matter what conditions.

Different in so many ways, both are at the top of their game and hungry for more successes. While Mika will venture into the E3 class for the first time ever it comes after four consecutive titles – two in E2 and two in E1. Looking to claim the 'full set' and continue his winning ways while at the same time refreshing his motivation by competing in a new class, nothing suggests Mika will be anything but up for a championship fight.

Two things will be new for David in 2011, despite the fact that he'll be competing in the E3 class for another season. Firstly, he'll be racing aboard new – yet familiar – machinery. Secondly, unlike last year, his expected closest championship rival won't be mounted on two-stroke machinery. It can be argued that David, in knowing the class and knowing what it takes to win in it, holds an important early season advantage. But with both Mika and David as hard working as they are experienced and determined, the fight for the 2011 Enduro 3 championship should go down to the wire.

Add into the mix three if not four two-stroke mounted riders – all of which will play an important role in the championship's outcome – and just like the E2 class it's easy to see that the E3 category certainly won't be lacking in any way this year...

Antoine Meo should play a key role in what promises to be a super-exciting 2011 EWC

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DT-1 are pushing air filter technology to the max to ensure that your race engine is properly protected from sucking in dirt, dust and debris while still being able to breathe freely enough to perform at its very best. The latest and greatest products to be released from their Belgian plant at Lommel is this Airpower filter and super sealing filter cage that's available through Race FX's dealer network right now.

Price: Cage £TBC

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Supplier: racefx.co.uk

Contact: 0845 450 1448



PULSE RACING

PRO-LITE RAP HANDGUARD

Pulse Racing have released yet another bang on product this month only this time aimed at the hardcore enduro/trail riding market. Wraparound handguards are an absolute godsend to serious off-road riders who need to protect their hands from tree trunks, branches, rocks and roost. These Pro-Lite Rap handguards are absolutely spot on for that task and every bit as good as – if not better than – anything similar available on the market today.

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Contact: Race FX 0845 450 1448

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2011 CORE RACEWEAR

2011 Thor Core Racewear is the result of over 40 years of experience and research combined with tons of track testing by pro riders like McGrath, Villopoto, Weimer, Pourcel and Robbie Maddo. Basically the kit has more innovative features than we can squeeze in this one issue so do yourself a favour and go to your nearest stockist to check it out!

Price: Pants £139.99

Jersey £44.99

Gloves £29.99

Supplier: madison.co.uk

Contact: 0870 034 7226



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Getting this Splatter on Katey's chest took a lot of persuasion but once it was on there she loved the way it felt! What a nice young lady and what a jolly nice t-shirt too...

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Contact: 01778 394909

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2011 HELMET RANGE

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Price: Prime 2 £79.99

Optimal 2 £139.99

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Contact: sales@decade-europe.com



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Price: See website

Supplier: freestylextreme.com

Contact: 0117 967 2240

FOX RACING

RIOT ACID GREEN RACEWEAR

Fans of Futurama will know that the robot Bender – who has a real in your face interface – is famed for his massive amounts of attitude which is why if he were a motocrosser he'd be all over this Riot Acid Green racewear from Fox because it most definitely reeks of it!

Price: V3 Riot Helmet £240

360 Riot Jersey £43

360 Riot Pants £140

360 Riot Glove £28

The Main Riot goggle £30

Supplier: foxeurope.com

Contact: 0191 487 6100



DINGDONG!

AND YOUR OFF-ROAD HEROES OF 2010 ARE...

TV and film actors have the Oscars and the BAFTAs, there's the Tonys for proper thespians, the Woodys for improper thespians, the Grammys, the Brits, the Golden Globes – the list of awards goes on and on. Why, there's even something called the BBC Sports Personality of the Year although an off-road rider's got a better chance of grabbing an Oscar to be perfectly honest.

A couple of years ago we decided to try and redress the balance with a prize-giving of our own. Officially known as the Dirt Bike Rider Awards, unofficially this has been shortened to a combination of 'DBR' and 'gong' that's resulted in you, our lovely readers, each year voting so see who's done enough over the course of the season to win a highly-coveted Dong.

It's fair to say that 2010 was a pretty good year all round when it came to off-road racing. At least it was if you didn't care too much about a British winner. In the Maxxis domestic series we were treated to awesome displays from eventual champs Evgeny Bobryshev in MX1 and Zach Osborne in MX2. Sure, Stephen Sword and Jake Nicholls chased them hard but when the fat lady started to sing the titles were heading off to Russia and America.

Deposed Maxxis champ Brad Anderson did his bit for queen and country by winning the MX1 class in the Red Bull Pro Nationals and the MX2 honours went to Ireland's Martin Barr but on the motocross side of things that's about as good as it got for the Brits. On the world scene Italy's Antonio Cairoli defended his MX1 crown and, in the process, gave KTM's new 350 a glorious debut season. And KTM were celebrating in MX2 as well where Frenchman Marvin Musquin retained his title.

Over the pond it was looking good for

another French champion in MX2 – or Lites as the Yanks like to call them – with Christophe Pourcel leading the AMA outdoor hunt into the final round before crashing out of contention and handing the title to 'Ice' Trey Canard. Brits Max Anstie and Tommy Searle spent more time injured than racing but all wasn't lost for our homegrown heroes with Dean Wilson declaring his Scottish rather than Canadian roots and racing to fourth overall with a few moto wins to his name.

Up in the 450cc class and with little in the way of big names to trouble him, Ryan Dungey laid down a dominant rookie outdoor season on the fo-fiddy to add to his dominant rookie indoor season on the fo-fiddy. To be fair to Ryan, he then blew everyone away at the MXdN in Colorado to outline just how fast he is as Britain – represented by Anderson, Wilson and Nicholls – battled to a fantastic fourth.

So after a hard-fought season of banging bars around the globe it looks like Britain is without a world off-road champion. But hold on! We're forgetting the real man's world of enduros where David Knight – the Manxman man mountain – slugged his way to victory in the E3 category. Following a troubled season in '09 with BMW after returning victorious from the USA, Knight headed back to KTM, rolled his sleeves up and battered his way to world crown #3. DK, we salute you!

Okay, that's easily enough recapping for one year. Let's move on to the business in hand – the Dirt Bike Rider Awards 2010, aka the Dongs!

This time around we had a massive response – despite a shorter timeframe than usual to get your votes across – with some expected and some unexpected winners. So, without any further arsing about...

BRITISH OFF-ROAD PERSONALITY OF THE YEAR

- 1 **Jake Nicholls**
- 2 *David Knight*
- 3 *Dean Wilson*

BEST BRITISH MOTOCROSS RACER

- 1 **Dean Wilson**
- 2 *Stephen Sword*
- 3 *Jake Nicholls*

BEST BRITISH AMATEUR MOTOCROSS RACER

- 1 **Lee Dunham**
- 2 *Lee Payne*
- 3 *Ben Saunders*

BEST BRITISH YOUTH MOTOCROSS RACER

- 1 **Conrad Mewse**
- 2 *Nathan Watson*
- 3 *Connor Walkley*

BEST INTERNATIONAL MOTOCROSS RACER

- 1 **Trey Canard**
- 2 *Ryan Dungey*
- 3 *Zach Osborne*

BEST FEMALE MOTOCROSS RACER

- 1 **Ashley Fiolek**
- 2 *Natalie Kane*
- 3 *Tarah Geiger*

BEST INTERNATIONAL OFF-ROAD RACER

- 1 **Antoine Meo**
- 2 *Mika Ahola*
- 3 *Taddy Blazusiak*

BEST BRITISH OFF-ROAD RACER

- 1 **David Knight**
- 2 *Jason Thomas*
- 3 *Paul Edmondson*

CRASHER OF THE YEAR

- 1 **Christophe Pourcel**
- 2 *Max Anstie*
- 3 *Billy MacKenzie*

BEST FMX RIDER

- 1 **Levi Sherwood**
- 2 *Robbie Maddison*
- 3 *Nate Adams*

JAKE NICHOLLS

BRITISH OFF-ROAD PERSONALITY OF THE YEAR

"Personality of the year again! Didn't see that coming to be honest. Mega, thanks guys – I'm pumped to have beaten the other ol' boys again. Hope this doesn't mean I'm gonna have to start cracking jokes in my column to retain my title every year now – ha ha. But I've got to admit I'm a bit gutted to slip to third in the Best British Motocross Racer category – let's hope I can regain my title in 2011 with some wins. Thanks for the continued support – it means a lot to me. Cheers..."

SUPERCROSS

When the gate drops the bulls**t stops and Stateside there's been plenty of hype going into the 2011 SX season. Steve Cox, our man in the US, will be at each and every AMA round to bring you an exclusive and indepth insight into the biggest dirt bike series on the planet...





© Steve Cox

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RED REDEMPTION!

DROPPED BY THE FACTORY KTM SQUAD AFTER A DISAPPOINTING DEBUT SEASON IN MX1, RUI GONCALVES HAS BEEN GIVEN ANOTHER CHANCE TO REALISE HIS WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP DREAM AFTER BEING SNAPPED UP BY THE HONDA WORLD MOTOCROSS TEAM

Interview and photos by **Nuno Laranjeira**

Last year was a case of – and let's not mince our words here – s**t or bust for Rui Goncalves as far as his association with KTM was concerned. The popular Portuguese rider had lost the '09 MX2 title to his 'surprise' team-mate Marvin Musquin and, too old for a 250F according to the new FIM age limits, was forced to move into the MX1 division while still recovering from much delayed shoulder surgery.

On board one of the two 350s the Red Bull KTM factory team debuted against all-450 opposition, Rui knew it was his last chance to show he was still worth the trust the Austrian manufacturer had put in him. And despite an understandably slow start to the season which included sitting out the opening two GPs he finished a respectable 11th in the championship. Respectable but still a long way short of KTM's expectations.

So the 25-year-old was without a ride for 2011 – at least he was until he found himself teaming up with current British MX1 champion Evgeny Bobryshev on the newly-formed and factory-supported Honda World Motocross Team.

Rui's fluent in five languages but to make him feel right at home we dispatched fellow Portuguese Nuno Laranjeira to get the new Honda rider's thoughts on the last few seasons and what lies ahead...

DBR: How would you describe your first season in the MX1 class?

RG: "I didn't have the best of starts because it took me around four months to recover from my shoulder surgery and when I finally got to do my first GP of the season in Valkenswaard I was still very unprepared with only two weeks of practice on the bike. Things got better from there onwards but the fact is that I hadn't had any time to prepare for the season – I only really started to practice already with the championship running and by then I had a big gap to my adversaries. I learned a lot for my first year and in the second half of the season I was improving on my results."

DBR: How did you like the KTM 350? Did it suit you or do you think you would have had better results with a 450?

RG: "I couldn't say that, all that I can say is that I'm very proud of being part of the 350 development since the start as it was still a kind of a prototype bike. I was told that I was going to race with it in 2010 and to do my first season on a bike that is more like a 250 was a good transition for me so in that sense it made things easier and I translated that into some good results. We had difficulties with the performance on some jumps but we got over it and overall it revealed itself as a very balanced bike."

DBR: How about that shoulder injury? Were you criticised for not undergoing surgery right after the 2009 season finished? That shoulder was popping out for a long time...

RG: "At the end of the '09 season the doctors didn't find it so bad to be subject to surgery – only after it popped out again in January did they realise that it had to be done. I can't be sorry for the way things happened, the truth is that in 2009 every time I went to the hospital to be checked after the shoulder came out it was already back in place and the doctors never thought it bad enough to need surgery. Only when they finally opened it in January did they discover that everything was in a mess with the cartilage coming off the bone so they really had to repair it."

DBR: No-one likes to go under the knife but don't you think that by not having that surgery earlier you might have ruined what could have been a much better first MX1 season and, as a consequence, lost your KTM contract?

RG: "No, I never thought in those terms about it – at the time I just wanted to ride 100 per cent fit! If I had continued riding in that condition I wasn't going to be competitive even considering it was my first season in MX1. Maybe it would have been possible to continue on the team if the results were different like they were in the second half of the championship." >>





Rui's a great sand rider but he shows the strain after the Belgian GP at Lommel



Rui re-enacts his favourite scene from Ghost – all he needs is for Nuno to slide into position...

DBR: You've landed on your feet with the Honda deal but at the time it must have come as a big blow to lose your ride with KTM...

RG: "KTM decided to reduce the number of riders on the team – they went from three riders to only two in MX1 so it's not the case where I'm being replaced. I wouldn't have minded to continue with them. Obviously, to be on a team like Red Bull KTM is always a reason to be proud – I've been with them for the last three years and it was all good for me."

"The people I met during that time had a big influence on my success as a rider and of course I'm going to miss them. But life goes on as usual and I have to think about the future – I have a new chapter in my career now and I just have to look forward to it with motivation. I still want to be world champion – I always worked with that in mind and 2011 it's not going to be any different."

DBR: Speaking of being a world champion – in 2009 you had your last chance to get a title in the MX2 class but after Shaun Simpson was injured the factory hired Marvin Musquin who was leading the series for Honda.

Did you feel that you were never considered a 'real' title contender?

RG: "I always tried to fight for the title regardless of my adversaries. Putting Marvin on the team at that time was KTM's decision and I just had to accept it but I can tell you that it wasn't easy. To watch the rider that was leading the championship on another team becoming my team-mate with everyone also helping and supporting him, to see him having access to all the resources I had on the factory team was a difficult situation for me but I had to understand it. I'm just a rider – it's the bosses and team managers who decide about the team and KTM wanted to be sure that they would get the title in the end. With Marvin and me they did a one-two and won the manufacturers also."

DBR: How did you remain motivated?

RG: "I had several occasions to reflect about all that was happening and I focused on working even harder like I always did in the past. My family and my girlfriend gave me a lot of support also although there were times that it was difficult to accept and to be able to continue to look everyone in the eye. I'm a professional

rider and I had to behave like people expected so that's what I did during 2009, always trying to turn things around in my mind."

DBR: You're seen as one of the hardest workers in the paddock in order to get on the same pace as the new kids. Is it like this? And if so when did you realise that you had to work even harder?

RG: "With this new generation of younger and faster riders coming to motocross with new and completely different techniques than mine I feel the need to adapt and change. I'm only 25 years old and on my way to my 10th year racing in the world championship but I come from a different generation with old-school riding techniques."

"But one thing will always be true – without work there's no way of getting good results and that is one of my strongest points. I realised that I had to work harder the instant I left home when I was 16 and came to the world stage. I felt that I had the responsibility to succeed also because of the extra time and effort my parents had to put in in order to support me – that reason alone was strong enough to keep me going."





Holeshotting in Brazil in '09 – 'new' team-mate Marvin Musquin runs the red series leader's plate...

A DECADE ON!

FOLLOWING J-ROD...

Portugal is hardly a hot bed of big-name MX racers but Rui is following in the footsteps of Joaquim Rodrigues who rode for Martin Honda in 2001...

"Motocross in Portugal doesn't get much attention although I will be doing some promotional work in the following years together with Honda Portugal to develop the image Honda, myself and the sport of motocross have with the Portuguese public. I feel proud of the fact that even coming from a small European country the teams believe in me for what I'm worth and not for the size of the market my country represents. Martin Honda is a very strong and solid team with a fantastic group of people and I've been feeling very comfortable with them.

"They also appreciate the fact that I bring my experience from another factory team to them. There's still a lot of work to be done but the structure is very professional so I believe we will achieve good results."



It's early days but all the signs are that the 450 power suits Goncalves' smooth style



Rui had a super-successful schoolie career on Hondas

RUI'S RED RETURN!

HOME TO HONDA...

"I was the Portuguese Junior 85cc vice-champion with Honda in 1997 and then won the title in '98 and '99 by winning all the races in both years. In '99 I was also third in the 125cc class. I fought again for the title in 2000 finishing runner-up, finally being 125cc champion in '01 and third in the SX championship – all under the Honda awning. Curiously, my first ever world championship race was on a Honda in Castiglione del Lago in 2001 when J-Rod [Joaquim Rodrigues] who was riding for them got injured. At the time I was riding on his father's Honda team in Portugal and they asked me to ride there – that was my debut in world MX."



During his time with KTM Rui forged a close relationship with Stefan Everts and the team



Rui tears up the track in his native Portugal

DBR: With your Everts-like style didn't you think you'd be more of an MX1 rider rather than competing in MX2 which is full of American-influenced kids? Surely you felt a bit old among them?

RG: "I think that in the MX1 class my smooth style can be an advantage although the style is becoming more aggressive on the 450s also. I felt that this year. The number of riders able to win a race in the world championship has increased every year so the age limit in MX2 was a good measure. I'm already preparing for the new season keeping in mind what I learned this year – there's a healthy diversity of styles and ages in MX1 now and it's really becoming more and more competitive."

DBR: How did the Honda deal come up?

RG: "I had some more possible deals with other teams but after speaking with Roger [Harvey] I got my contract directly with Honda Europe with a very close relationship with the factory in Japan. We already spent a week in Japan testing some new top equipment for 2011. I felt really good to be given this opportunity, to be able to

work directly with the Japanese engineers – I felt confident as I thought that this was an unusual thing.

"They've been working hard to build the most competitive bike to suit me and everyone is very enthusiastic about it. I've never worked directly with a Japanese factory before and they have everything there of course. If we were doing this in Europe then it would take us a longer time to achieve the best bike so going to Japan was just perfect!"

DBR: Do you feel this is more of a challenge to you as you're right in the middle of what could become Honda's big comeback?

RG: "I will continue to fight for my dream of becoming world champion and at the same time I'm able to help putting Honda back at the highest competitive level through good results. I consider it as a two-in-one goal and it will be hard but hopefully achievable."

DBR: How about the CRF450F? Does it suit your style better than the 350cc KTM?

RG: "Ah, it's totally different. I can't say yet.

The base is very good, that's my first impression, I haven't had enough time practising on it to say. I need to do some races before but up to now it has all been very positive."

DBR: Are we going to watch more Goncalves/Simpson fights this year? Or is it Bobryshev this time? He got in the top 10 only one point ahead of you last year...

RG: "It's always possible – with Shaun, Bobby and many others I hope. We both work hard and I have my experience so Honda riders will be strong for sure. I'll spend two weeks with the team at an altitude base training in Italy during the winter so that will be challenging but helpful and I'll also keep on working with Russell White, my personal trainer."

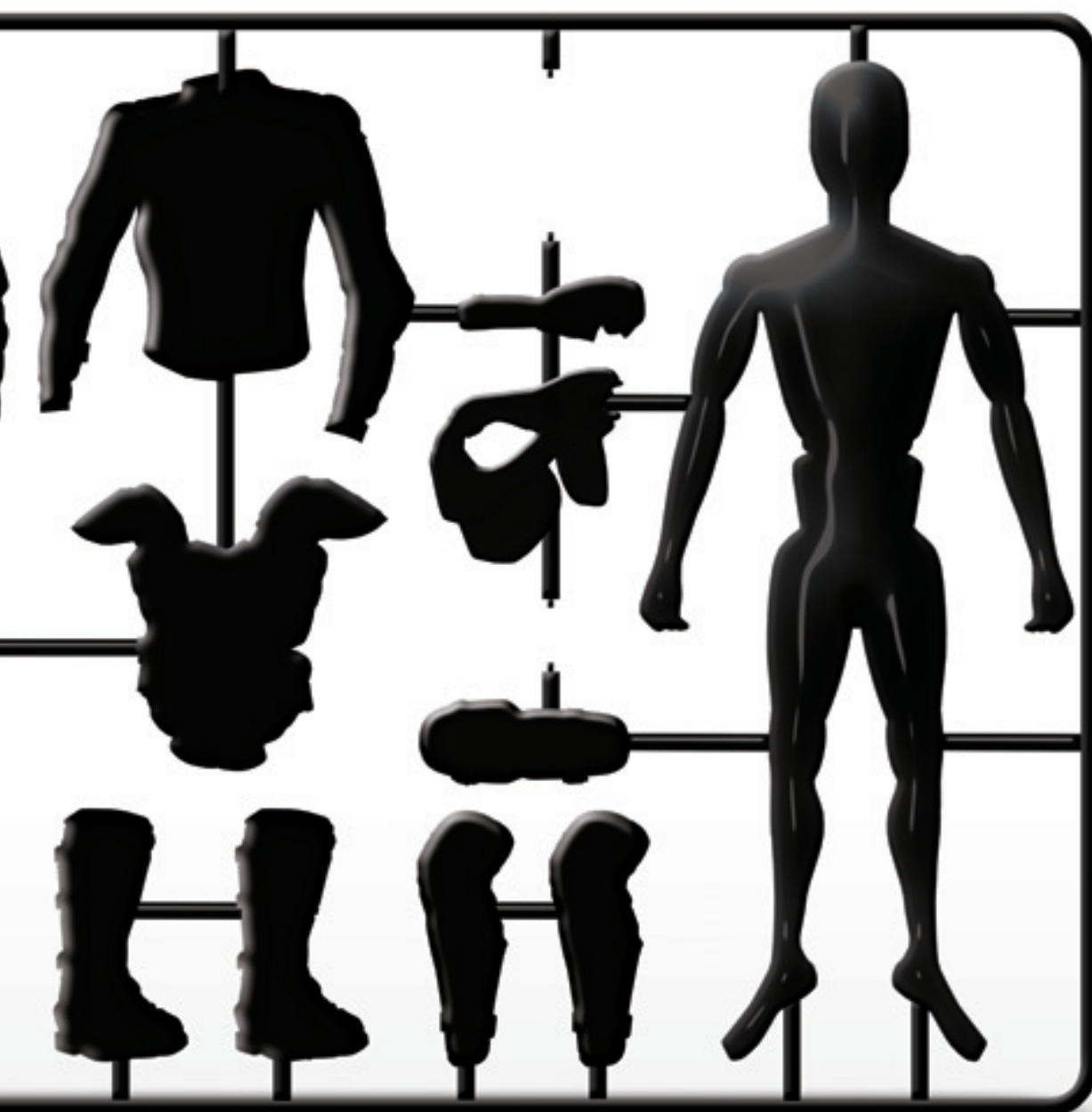
DBR: You are multilingual and speak five different languages – are you looking forward to learning Russian with Bobby?

RG: "I don't know, I think we're going to speak in 'our' English. We were together in Japan and I found him a very cool guy, I didn't know him that well before."

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Gert Krestinov's race bike adds to the off-road flavour of Kawasaki's stand

SNOW BUSINESS!

EVEN EARLY ARCTIC CONDITIONS DON'T STOP CLOSE TO 100K BIKE FANS HITTING THE NEC FOR CAROLE NASH MOTORCYCLE LIVE – BUT THE BIG QUESTION IS DOES IT DO OFF-ROAD ANY GOOD?

Words by **Sean Lawless** and **Jenni Dick**

Snow and ice ain't exactly the weather conditions of choice for the majority of motorcyclists – especially our asphalt-cruising cousins – but even an unseasonably early blast from the Baltic fails to dissuade just short of 100,000 bike fans from turning out for the Carole Nash Motorcycle Live show at Birmingham's NEC.

Sure, the revamped nine-day show's mostly aimed at riders who like to tear-up the Tarmac but following on from last year's launch of a bespoke off-road zone, for 2010 the dirt bike presence has been ramped up further and lessons have been learned from 2009's wobbly debut.

This time around the show's off-road flavour is sprinkled throughout the halls with the Japanese

Big Four all exhibiting dirt bikes alongside their more mainstream machines plus glitzy displays from Euro big-hitters KTM and Husqvarna. And the off-road zone, instead of coming across as an after-thought in a separate hall, is right in the thick of it with the Suzuki and Yamaha Off-Road Experiences drawing a steady stream of dirt-curious customers.

"The show has gone really well for us," says Honda's evergreen Roger Harvey. "We have launched the Honda World Motocross Team for 2011 and everyone has done a great job in arranging everything. We've just come from a good test in Japan where both Rui [Goncalves] and Evgeny [Bobryshev] worked really, really hard. I am certainly looking forward to the next few months as the boys are working well together. >>

The Ramp'd Up display gives show-goers a taste of freestyle...



...and also encourages audience participation!



CHRIS BROCK UK FREESTYLE FOUNDER

"The show has been great for us. It's been an awareness thing to put it out there what we do and show how good the sport is. We've been promoting to the kids more than anything and over the weekends it's been really busy at our displays. The weather hasn't helped the show but it's been good for us. Personally I think the roads are quite dangerous for road bikers so to start out on an off-road bike is a lot better in that you don't have so many people around you and it's on different types of terrain. I started out riding a lot of BMX and trials, combined the two together and here we are doing freestyle – hopefully we can get a few more people interested."

Chris Brock – FMX prophet





The Honda World Motocross Team is launched at the NEC with Evgeny Bobryshev and Rui Goncalves

EVGENY BOBRYSHEV FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE

"The show has been great fun and also a chance to spend some time with my new team for next year. We launched the team and it's been good to meet some of the British fans. I also got my first licence with Honda on a CRF50 and we competed in a pub quiz on the Honda stand. It's been fun to be part of the Honda family and there were some awesome bikes on display here."

"I think the off-road section in the NEC show is really important for our sport – with the off-road experiences and try-outs it gives people who are road orientated the opportunity to look and try our sport with their families. I don't think the show is yet attracting many off-road fans but it's certainly inviting new people to take up off-road which can only be good for us."

A hero in both the road and off-road camps, Irishman Jonathan Rea was a super-fast schoolboy MX rider before switching to road racing. Despite injuries he ended the 2010 season fourth in the World Superbike Championship and continues to support off-road sport through his JAR Honda motocross team.

"Although normally MX is involved in the

show some way, the audience isn't usually really into motocross but yesterday it was part of the main stage with the Honda World Motocross 2011 team launch," says Jonathan. "I was intrigued by that being a motocross fan anyway but they had a massive crowd watching and that audience wouldn't have been mainly motocross people. It's definitely great everything that's been put on – road bikers can come and try out a dirt bike or let their kids have a go so there's loads to go at which hasn't been here in the past."

"Motocross gave me a huge amount of bike experience in my childhood and now it helps to keep me fit and sharp. I spend way too much money pimping my motocross bike out but I've



When Jenni met Jonny





Another proud pupil for Paul Cowshall



Barry Johnson's indoor SX track goes down a storm



New YZ250F and a big bloke in braces

TOPTEACHER

BARRY JOHNSON

"The show's been good as we've been getting new riders onto dirt bikes including road bikers and first time riders. We have a mini supercross style track indoors and it's the second time we've done it like this as over the last few years it's always been outdoors. People are really shocked how tiring it is riding a dirtbike around this tiny little track but the feedback has been excellent and 90 per cent of the people have never been on an off-road bike before.

"Mostly, they're shocked how much fun you can have without going a hundred miles an hour. One of the main things I've noticed is many of them need to improve their basic biking skills – they ride a 120bhp superbike but can't corner one of these around a little dirt track. That's why we like to give them a chance to experience it and it's been working great."

worked with a few riders in the past including Thomas Fenwick and David Goosen. Next year I'm going to work with an Irish kid called Michael McCammond which I'm looking forward to. I like to give something back to the sport that's given me so much pleasure and gave me a great opportunity.

"When I was fit and not injured I was riding maybe once a week at home in the Isle of Man with Knighter. He's awesome, he's just an animal and we ride out sometimes with Cal [Crutchlow] and Keith [Amor] – we go to Knighter's sand track or up in the hills and it's great fun."

For freestyle fans the regular Ramp'd Up displays give visitors a chance to check out the radical side of off-road sport with the likes of Chris Brock, Jamie Squibb and Dave Wiggins

TOPTEACHER

PAUL COWSHALL

"It's been really good this year. We've taken riders from six years – boys and girls – to full-grown adults who perhaps haven't ridden at all or have only ridden on the roads before. We've had around 444 riders in total and the kids love it with big grins on their faces when they come off the bikes.

"It's all about giving people the experience of riding an off-road bike – in fact, some of them can't even ride a bicycle but with the team of instructors we get them riding in five minutes in a safe environment which maybe will lead some of them into a motorcycling career.

"It's definitely worked having this here at the NEC show but what we do also works well at the Red Bull Pro Nationals and non-motorcycling events. We have around 60 people a day trying out dirt biking and it's really satisfying to see kids who are really nervous to begin with come off the track really happy and wanting another go."

upholding the honour of UK jump monkeys.

"The show organisers spoke with Matt Bates over the last few years about how they can work together and this is the first stage of a four to five year plan to develop off-road in the NEC motorcycle show," explains Events22 Production Manager Steve Price. "The off-road combination is an answer to what many people have said on the forums they've wanted to see and would interest them more in coming to the show.

"With sports bike sales declining and with enduro, trails and big off-road bikes becoming more popular, the off-road side of things is becoming more and more important. The freestyle shows are just the first part of the plan and it will be evolving over the next few years to encourage more interest in our sport."



The ACU do their bit to advance the off-road side of the sport





GOLD RUSH!

FOLLOWING A FEW LOW-PROFILE YEARS, ICONIC SUSPENSION MANUFACTURER ÖHLINS IS NOW MUSCLING ITS WAY BACK INTO THE MAINSTREAM MOTOCROSS MARKET...

Words by Jon Urry Photos by Jon Urry and Öhlins

After a few years in the wilderness, Öhlins is now throwing its full weight behind production motocross suspension. We caught up with Öhlins founder Kenth Öhlin to discover the history behind the company and how his passion for off-road has seen Öhlins invest more time and effort into MX suspension. He also let slip that electronic suspension could find its way onto motocross tracks in the very near future...

"I am both really happy and very disappointed about Öhlins in motocross lately. Four years ago we started to discuss whether or not we were going to continue in motocross. We were selling products but not to the level of performance that we should have been and we thought it may be time to stop. We took a decision that we should do a certain amount of investment and see if we could reach the level we should be at. In 2010 I feel we have reached the top level again."

Kenth Öhlin's fairly stark assessment of his company's performance in the off-road market is tinged with a hint of sadness. You may not know it but the company whose famous yellow springs and gold forks can be seen dominating most forms of racing on Tarmac has its roots firmly based in the off-road world.

Despite being somewhat coy about his own abilities, Kenth was a very accomplished motocross rider. Born in Sweden, he started riding off-road when he was 12 years old and soon progressed to international level in an era when Swedish riders dominated the off-road scene.

"In the late 1960s and early 1970s there were six or seven riders from Sweden in the top 10 in both 250 and 500cc world championships, we were the leading country in motocross. It was tough to win a national race and even harder to qualify for an international but by the end of my career I was travelling around Europe competing in international events. I was a good international rider, if not a grand prix rider."

But for Kenth riding the bikes was only part of the story. Having grown up around his father's engineering shop, by the time he was racing Kenth already had a strong understanding of how a motorcycle worked and, more importantly, how to improve it

"We all built and worked on our motorcycles ourselves. We would reshape and modify them a lot and I started learning about suspension in this way, altering my own bike and helping out other riders. In those days it was only Girling suspension and those shocks didn't perform very well at all."

Although a man whose name will always be linked with suspension, Kenth initially made a reputation for himself as an engine tuner.

"I started a small company that specialised in modifying two-stroke engines. I was one of the first in Europe to work with reed valves after learning about the technology from Eyvind Boyesen in America, then I made a couple of engines for the Swedish factory Husqvarna riders. This was 1970 or 1971 and we had a prototype engine that was only powering the bottom end – really, really low rpm. I changed it by adding different exhaust

pipes and by the end of the year we were winning races with it, beating the dominant Yamahas."

Before long his client list included Husqvarna – who commissioned him to design all of their exhausts – as well as many Swedish racers. But the competition bug was still in his system and this passion led to the formation of Öhlins as we know it today.

"I was still riding in the Swedish motocross championship at weekends and I borrowed a bike from the Swedish factory Kawasaki rider Thorleif Hansen and modified it a little... He used the bike in a grand prix and won, after that Kawasaki asked me to modify all of their factory bikes. I was lucky, at that time we had plenty of good Swedish riders and the second guy to use my products was Hakan Andersson, a 250 world champion. Word soon spread and at the Swedish GP I had a lot of requests for my shock absorbers."

But Kenth offered more than just a product, along with the Öhlins shock you also gained access to the Öhlins racing service. And driven by a passion for the sport as well as the desire to improve his suspension, Kenth went to extraordinary lengths to support his riders.

"I travelled all over Europe at the weekends in a truck providing a racing service for riders. I would work Monday to Friday at the factory and then drive myself – or if I was lucky a workmate would come with me – to the race meetings. It was hard work but a wonderful time."

It was hard work that paid off. Öhlins has always had the philosophy that the best place to test and develop a product is on the racetrack and it wasn't long before Öhlins suspension caught the eye of a major manufacturer.

"After the second year of supporting racers, Husqvarna asked if it was possible to have suspension from us as OE equipment on their bikes. At first I said I was only a small firm and we didn't have the production facilities but then I took a decision to focus the business on suspension and make my own units. I was lucky, my father's machine shop was able to produce the parts and in 1976 Öhlins was born. I guess I owe a lot to Husqvarna, without them I may not have concentrated on suspension and would still be making exhausts and tuning engines."

So what was it that set the newly-formed Öhlins suspension aside from the competition?

"In those days it wasn't really a tough job to beat the standard units. We looked at the problems that we had with the products that were already on the market and the first point was to realise that the materials and oil they were using was wrong. We used a different type of oil and improved the quality of the components inside the shocks. The shims in Öhlins suspension were of a far better quality than the competition which made a huge difference. We used a stainless heat-treated material on our shims where the competition would use cheaper materials and we also did a lot of testing and even built a hydraulic suspension dyno which was a key factor in our success. But at the heart of it all was racing. It was – and still is – crucial to everything we do."

Within two years Öhlins shocks had won their first >>

OFF-ROAD FOCUS

ELECTRIC SHOCKERS?

"We have been putting a lot of focus back into the motocross world – it is a very important sector to Öhlins," admits Johnny Bräster, Vice President of marketing and sales

"We will see more bikes with Öhlins as OE equipment but probably not motocross bikes. The whole trend for motocross bikes is price, price, price so it is not easy for a manufacturer to put Öhlins on and add possibly £200 to the end user. The market is so sensitive the customer may decide not to buy the bike because of this. However, I think that markets such as enduro riders who are older, they will be happy to add a few hundred pounds for something different.

"And electronic suspension could definitely work on a motocross bike. Why not? From a theoretical point of view it is no problem but it depends what you are wanting to achieve. If you can get improvements there is no technical obstacle to do it, it is definitely possible. We may have experimented with such systems..."



Johnny Bräster,
Vice President of
marketing and sales



world championship when Russian Gennady Moiseev took the 250cc title but initially riders were using Öhlins shocks that looked very different to today's units. They didn't have a yellow spring.

"At the start our shocks had a brown spring but we soon changed this as we needed to have something that stuck out, showed that it was an Öhlins shock on the bike. For me gold means winning – you have an Olympic gold medal when you succeed – and I wanted people to think of our product as a gold medal."

The following years saw Öhlins dominate the motocross suspension world and it wasn't long before road racers started to approach Kenth.

"Compared to motocross, road bikes were quite easy to develop. When we entered road racing the factories weren't focused on suspension, they were more concerned with engine power. I met Kenny Roberts quite early and he really understood suspension, probably because of his flat track background. I still believe that motocross is the toughest sport for suspension to deal with. It isn't easy at all in road

racing but from the beginning you have more equipment to analyse what is going on and the speed of the shock and the damping forces are less."

Within a few years Öhlins had their first world title when Eddie Lawson won the 1984 500cc championship for Yamaha using Öhlins shocks, a combination that paved the way for a major change within the company.

"Until the 1980s I had a partner in Öhlins and he sold his 50 per cent stake in the company to Yamaha in 1987. At this time we were putting a lot of money into electronics and we realised that we couldn't put this product on the market ourselves, we needed a large company behind us. Öhlins had a contract with Yamaha to look after all of their worldwide racing and Mr Toshimitsu Iio, who was the engineer in charge of the factory bikes, was a good friend. We discussed my plan over a beer one night and he mentioned the idea of buying Öhlins to the Yamaha management without telling me. After a while he called me up and said 'Yamaha are interested in buying you, what do you think?'"

Was it a hard decision for Kenth to sell half of a company that he had dedicated over a decade of his life to making succeed?

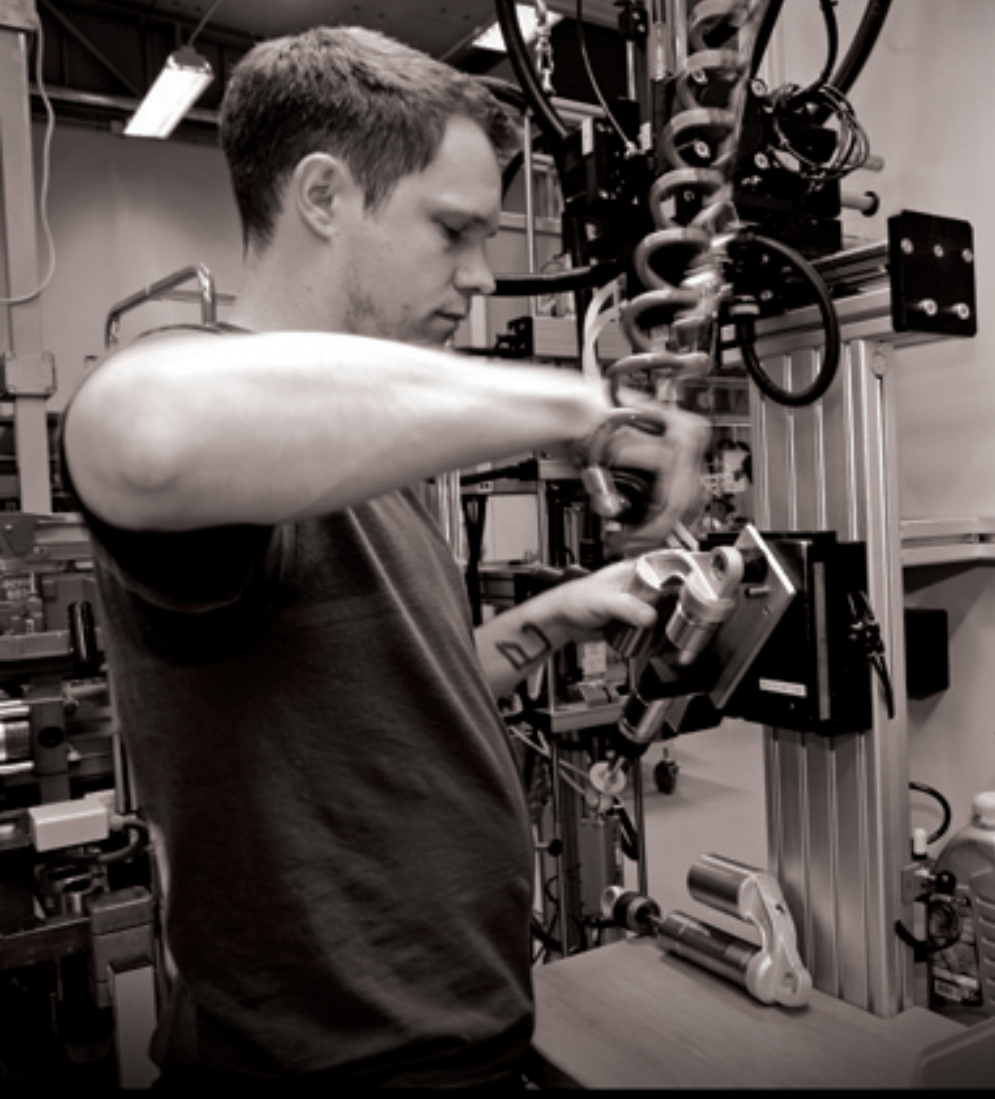
"I wasn't worried about the sale as I'd worked with Yamaha for many years and knew their mentality. They were the number one company when it came to thinking about technology and my friend Mr Iio came and stayed in Sweden for eight years to be a link between us and the factory."

With this new investment Öhlins expanded the road racing side and soon became the number one suspension firm in grand prix racing but while the off-road side became less focussed, Öhlins continued to develop off-road products using Yamaha's money – including a very early form of electronic suspension and in later years the two-wheel-drive Yamaha 2-Trac.

By 2007 Kenth was forced to face a tough decision – retire or continue running the company.

"When I reached 60 I asked my family if they thought I should retire, I asked my wife if she would like to see me around all the time





Magnus Eriksson,
Product Manager for
motorcycle and
snowmobile products



SEEING IS BELIEVING

AS GOOD AS GOLD...

"Öhlins were supplying new forks until 2007 for motocross riders – however, we decided that we were not getting the quantities of orders to justify the costs so we concentrated on the TTX cartridge kits and put a lot of development into them instead," explains Magnus Eriksson, Product Manager for motorcycle and snowmobile products.

"The reactions were very positive to the kits and in 2010 our distributors were asking for complete forks as when you put in a cartridge kit you only see the top cap and this is hidden by the cross bar. The sticker is an optional extra and we don't pay people to put on the sticker! So we took the cartridge kits and put them in our own outers with high performance bushes and seals.

"The outers are not just a tube, they contain the very latest Öhlins technical knowledge. They are designed to flex slightly as if you make them too solid the bike becomes harsh so we have built in a certain degree of flex into the fork. If you take the kit and put it into a standard fork it is good, however if you use our shell as well it is even better. We are just about to start production on them now and in all honesty are virtually the same as the factory items we sold to specific teams last year – although half the price!

"We took the experience from those teams and built our forks using them – it is a full factory fork that has been put into production. Even our full factory teams will be running them, although they may have a few prototype parts for next year..."



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*Source: The Exchange, November 2010 **Excludes professional sports people.

ELECTRONIC SUSPENSION

WHAT THE HELL IS IT?

At the moment only BMW and Ducati have what can be called electronic suspension. Called ESA (Electronic Suspension Adjustment) and DES (Ducati Electronic Suspension) these systems are basically a bit crap as they are little more than an electric screwdriver. You push a button and a servomotor turns the compression or rebound adjuster for you, that's about it. Essentially they save you from reaching for the tool kit.

While these could be put on a motocross bike there is little point – the servomotor reacts too slowly to work in a race environment and would you want to push a button to firm up your suspension midway through a jump? Of course not! So what is needed is something known as semi-active suspension...

Called CES (Continuously Controlled Electronic Suspension), this system was developed by Öhlins in 2002 for use in the car world and uses an electro-mechanical valve that can alter the damping forces in the shock 100 times a second. The clever part is that CES can be linked to an onboard computer that monitors the suspension's movement and adjusts it automatically, making it semi-active. You hit a jump, sensors tell the CES valve the suspension has topped out and the computer automatically increases damping forces to prepare for landing.

Suddenly you have suspension that can be soft or firm depending on what is needed around the track as the computer can learn what is required by gathering data from its sensors. No longer do you have to make do with one suspension setting that is a compromise for the whole track. It is likely that road bikes will gain such a system within five years but unfortunately at the moment electronic suspension is banned by the FIM, something that is very likely to change.

Does it work? In 2008 the Yamaha WSB team ran with electronic suspension before it was banned – they won quite a few races...



**Kenth Öhlins –
MX racer turned
suspension visionary**

having spent so many years with me missing at race meets or travelling around the world. She said 'no, you need to continue your work as that's what you like to do' and I realised that I wouldn't be happy unless I was around young people who are coming up with new inventions and helping build and run the company so I approached Yamaha and asked to buy back their 50 per cent in Öhlins. If I was going to run the company I needed to own it all.

"I was lucky, the President of Yamaha Japan agreed to sell it back to me and we still remain very close to Yamaha today. They still own five per cent of Öhlins Racing as they like to have a small part of Öhlins."

With Öhlins now back under his control Kenth took the decision to concentrate more effort on off-road development rather than abandon it and instead focus on the road bike and automotive side of the business.

"I believe that motocross is a growing market, it has a huge potential and although it isn't as big

as say six years ago it will grow and we want to be part of this development with the right product."

With all the talk of electronic suspension on road bikes, can Kenth see this kind of technology transferring to the off-road world and being the 'right product'?

"We started developing electronic suspension in 1984 after I realised it was impossible to create a perfect set-up with traditional suspension on a motocross track. The problem at that time was that the computers were too big and even if we built our own computers they would be too large. We actually patented an electronic suspension design in 1984 that is very similar to the units we currently make."

Öhlins ran a semi-active suspension system in 2008 on Troy Corser and Nori Haga's Yamaha R1s in WSB which proved very successful but was soon banned by the FIM. Now the technology has improved and reduced in size does he see this as the future

direction for motocross?

"If you talk about motocross we have been working on electronic suspension for a while and it will arrive in a couple of years. Why not? If you are on the startgate you need different suspension to what you want when you go into the first corner. It is different to a road bike's suspension and needs a lot of technology built up around it but, yes, it can be done. What worries me is if they are going to forbid it in racing. But it is coming – and fast."

Having spent over 30 years involved at the very top level in many forms of motor racing, where does Kenth's heart really lie?

"If I am on a motocross track my heart is really, really there. If I am on a road racing circuit then it is a different type of feeling. I have been riding motocross so I know the difficulty doing that job but I have not raced on the roads so I find it harder to have that feeling even though I am extremely proud of what we have achieved in that scene. Motocross is still my first love."



**Öhlins' Swedish factory
is state of the art**

The HARD

BACK-TO-BACK U21 CHAMP AND NOW BACK-TO-BACK AMCA MX1 KINGPIN, BEN SAUNDERS HAS BEEN FORCED TO FIGHT FOR HIS SUCCESS...

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY MIKE WOOD

There's no point having the prettiest bike in the paddock, a swanky motorhome and a bottomless pot of dosh to fund your motocross addiction if you haven't got the talent and desire to back it up. In contrast take a rider like Ben Saunders who despite competing out of the back of a standard Trannie van with a limited budget throughout most of his career has chased and achieved his goals in the sport – in the process winning titles and rubbing shoulders with and beating some of the very best riders in British motocross.

Strong-minded with an overflowing abundance of natural riding ability, the two-time ACU British U21 champ made it back-to-back AMCA MX1 titles in 2010. Okay, his has not always been a story of hardship and at the peak of his pro racing days he was provided with some great support from the Phoneparts KTM team. But boy did he work hard to land the deal!

As well as being blessed with that fantastic natural ability, Ben is also a demon with the spanners and wherever possible likes to prepare and maintain his bikes for action. And the development throughout his career of technical knowledge has helped build his current business Race Connections which deals with engine tuning and suspension set-up. Ben's mechanical interest was in evidence from the start, watching his dad Tony build a bike around a Puch Maxi moped engine complete with a Fairy liquid bottle for a fuel tank! The four-year-old Ben looked instantly comfortable aboard that tiny hybrid machine.

With Tony as tutor – “dad was racing in the AMCA at that time and although only reaching Seniors status he had the perfect textbook riding style and was a great teacher” – Ben quickly progressed to an Italjet 50cc with gears and following another two years of polishing up his style around a local field was ready to go racing.

With his dad now having called a halt to his own competitive career Ben lined up for a Severn Valley SSC event at Maisemore in 1989 aboard a two-year-old KX60. He had to wait a further two years until – thanks to his generous granddad – he got his first new bike and was soon racing just about every available weekend and winning on a consistent basis. The Saunders Express was on a roll and after winning the 1992 Cotswold National the highlight of the season was to be a fantastic second overall in the BSMA Finals.

His apprenticeship on the little 60cc bike over, Ben then made the first of several bike changes throughout his career and switched to a Honda. Moving up to the 80cc class he was now competing alongside and banging bars

with the likes of Tom Church and Glen Phillips. Undeterred by the quality of his rivals, the results still continued to flow with Ben being rewarded in 1994 with a ride in a youth international meeting at Venray in Holland. Despite racing against lads up to 16 years old, Ben again underlined his ability by being the second British rider home in ninth overall.

Ben's results secured his first support deal with Dirtwheels aboard a converted Yamaha and Dirtwheels' faith was rewarded when Ben won the Canada Heights International that year. He was dealt a blow at the end of 1997 when his dad announced that he would no longer be able to finance the racing fund but, thankfully, Ben's career was kept on-track when his mum and stepdad Chris offered to add financial support. Moving onto an ARD 125cc Yamaha supplied by Dave Mason, Ben tried his hand in the ACU BYMX youth series and took on and beat such riders as Wayne Smith, Jordan Rose, Ricky Higgs, Billy MacKenzie and James Noble.

Despite again jumping on the MX merry-go-round and this time switching to a yellow Eurolift Suzuki, the results kept on flowing. Competing in both the BYMX and BSMA National series, he started the season in terrific style by winning the first four rounds of the BSMA contest. During 1999 at Brampton in a BYMX meeting also came what Ben describes as one of his funniest MX moments. >>



WAY!

*Leading Brad O'Leary and
defending champ David
Campbell in '08*



profile

*Ben keeps his head at the
final round of 2010 to retain
his crown*



The HAR

EuroSCEPTIC!

WHY BEN'S NOT INTO IMBA...

Ben's been handed the opportunity to compete in the IMBA European championship during his time with the AMCA but it's an experience he's not particularly enjoyed.

"I felt that generally the quality of tracks did not justify the time spent away from my business. Also, the journeys were very uncomfortable and tiring, travelling in a clapped out small Toyota van with either myself or my dad doing the driving! The IMBA trips were also affecting my performance in the home AMCA championship and I put one big crash that I suffered at Branston down to my tiredness following an event in the Czech Republic. This then really made my mind up to pull the plug on IMBA racing."



Ben signed for Delkevic Kawasaki for '08 after coming oh-so close to the MX1 title at his first attempt



"I discovered that the reed valve on my Suzuki had developed a hole and with my dad frantically working on the bike time was rapidly counting down before the start of the next moto. At this point I noticed that the travelling marshal also had a 125cc Suzuki so I cheekily asked him if I could borrow his bike. Reluctantly and at the last minute he agreed but it meant that I was left with a horrible water-filled rut on the inside of the startgate. Incredibly, I got the holeshot and led the race before eventually finishing third! After the race a shaken, pale-faced marshal told me he'd never seen his bike move so fast..."

After returning to ARD Yamaha and buoyed by some great BYMX results a 19-year-old Ben decided to cut his teeth in adult racing during 2000 and finished an impressive eighth overall in the British U21 championship and third overall in the qualifiers for the main ACU British 125cc series. Then Foot and Mouth disease halted all motorcycle sport in the UK and with the prospect of little or no action actually taking place in 2001 Ben took up an offer to race in the USA.

Competing in the California Golden State Grand National series he posted ninth, eighth

and third-placed finishes to earn second overall. On returning to the UK the Foot and Mouth crisis was thankfully over and Ben scored points in every round of a curtailed British championship.

Having proved to himself that he could be competitive in the main championship, Ben arrived at a major crossroads in his career and decided to make a bold and massive leap into becoming a full-time motocross rider. "I'm a person who has to be 100 per cent committed and dedicated in everything I do. I knew that if I was to compete against the best I also had to train, think and prepare like them!"

So he said goodbye to his employers Ledbury Van Hire and hello to full-time motocross. And what a great move that proved to be as aboard a one-year-old 125cc KTM he brilliantly won the ACU British U21 title and finished 11th overall in the main 125cc British MX championship. Ben's ability was quickly recognised as both Phoneparts KTM and Rob Hooper Suzuki chased his signature for 2003 with Ben plumping for the Phoneparts deal which also included clothing, a spares budget and even the use of a van! Good times!

The defence of his U21 title started strongly with podium placings at Winterpick Farm and Howton Court but Ben was not producing the desired results in the British 125cc championship. Desperate to keep his season on-track, he went back to preparing his own bike. "With the Phoneparts team having the bike for two or three days each week my lack of confidence in their set-up was affecting my racing. Having always prepared bikes myself I decided to take control. Using the successful settings I had used in the previous season when I won the Under 21 series my results immediately improved again."

At round three of the British 125cc championship Ben finished on the podium at Lyng behind Billy MacKenzie and Tom Church. Following his problems he'd also lost ground in the U21 title chase but with leader Jason Dougan missing the final round due to injury he could still mathematically retain his crown. In an incredible final meeting at Culham, Ben remained composed and cool to post a 1-1-3 scorecard and bag another crown by just a single point!

With the four-stroke revolution now taking control of the motocross scene, 2004 saw a move to thumper power for the first time and the RHR Yamaha team alongside Alex Rach and Jamie Lewis. That season was to also see him enter both the British and Irish GPs but both times out he failed to qualify. Despite again finishing inside the final top 10 in the main Maxxis ACU championship, Ben found the GP experience to be major eye-opener.

"Gore Basin made me think that maybe I'd reached a plateau in my riding ability and that it was going to be very difficult to push any faster and harder to move onto the next level and become a GP regular."

Following just one year on the RHR Yamaha, Ben then took up the offer of a Honda for the KRM Keith 'Piggy' Ree team. Then it was all change yet again and an unexpected return in 2006 to Phoneparts KTM. In an unhappy start to the season he crashed heavily at Matchams and broke his wrist. Sidelined for three months, his bike was returned to Phoneparts and this was to ultimately signal the end of Ben's pro racing career.

"This was certainly the lowest point in my racing career and I was feeling totally disillusioned. With plenty of time to consider my future I made the decision to then move into the AMCA. My dad had constantly told me how much he enjoyed riding with them and it also made sense as it released more time for me to

concentrate on my Race Connections business."

So for the first time Ben threw his leg over an MX1 machine, competing aboard a Honda 450F and jumping straight into the AMCA championship alongside fellow ACU defector David Campbell. Under no pressure and able to enjoy their racing, Ben and David dominated the AMCA MX1 title chase in a titanic season-long struggle which was to go right down to an incredible last moto decider. After leading the series from round one, Ben looked all set to claim the championship crown when he grabbed the holeshot in that final moto at Nympsfield. But the race was stopped and red-flagged due to a fallen rival just 35 agonising seconds short of reaching the point at which the result would stand.

In the re-run Campbell produced a dream start while Ben's championship hopes ended in an opening turn collision...

Naturally, Ben was totally dejected but his spirits were to be quickly lifted just 24 hours later following a surprise telephone call. "Nick Webster of Delkevic told me how sorry he had felt for me to lose the title in such a manner. He then went on to ask me if I would be interested in riding for them in 2008 aboard a Kawasaki 450F and naturally I was absolutely delighted by this offer!"

That first year aboard the Delkevic Kawasaki was to ultimately end in yet more heartache. Locking horns with Campbell and co, Ben was to

again lead the AMCA MX1 series going into the final round at a very wet and muddy Little Bowden. Suffering a devastating triple DNF due to mechanical problems, he dropped back to fourth in the final points table behind Campbell, Brad O'Leary and Charlie Hollis. For some riders such a demoralising blow could have been terminal but Ben remained mentally strong and bounced back in terrific style.

Still aboard the Delkevic Kawasaki, he was to eventually get his hands on that AMCA crown in 2009. Drawing on his fantastic natural ability and consistency he reeled off massive consecutive wins in the final seven motos of the championship season to make it a case of third time lucky. With that monkey now off his back Ben was far more relaxed and in 2010 quickly made it a title-winning double. Finishing on the podium in seven out of eight rounds, the crown was in the bag despite being pushed to a last moto decider by a very determined Lee Payne. Ben's success in 2010 was made even more remarkable by the fact that he was only able to go out practising twice during the year due to his business commitments!

At present Ben appears unsure of his plans for 2011 although he still talks of his love for two-stroke machines. "Wouldn't it be nice to win the AMCA MX2 title aboard a 144cc two-stroke and give those 250F four-bangers a thrashing?" he says with a glint in his eye. Well there's no doubt that if anybody can, Ben's the man...



In front in IMBA action at Condover



Racing to the 2009 title



Ben was unlucky to miss out in '08





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The 310 four-popper certainly feels faster around Geoff's snotty Marshfield enduro loop

DOGEAT DOG!

WALKER PITCHES HUSKY'S 250 TWO-STROKER HEAD-TO-HEAD AGAINST THEIR 310 FOUR-BANGER TO FIND OUT WHICH ONE'S TOP DOG...

Words by **Geoff Walker** Photos by **Sutty**

Husqvarna's world launch last year of their 2011 machines naturally centred around the all-new 449 and we didn't get to spend a major amount of time on the smaller thumpers or indeed the two-stroke models. This gave me an idea for a bit of a head-to-head challenge – putting a manufacturer's two-stroke bike up against the comparable four-stroke in their range. So as soon as both the 250 and 310 were available for us to test we hit my very cold and wet Marshfield enduro loop for the challenge of two versus four over a timed lap...

The WR250 two-stroke is a slightly weird one for me as at the tests in Italy over the last few years the bike has not run to its full potential. The jetting seemed to be off and it made the bike difficult to enjoy. The base was there but the final pieces in the puzzle were missing to make the bike reach 100 per cent of its potential. I had the opportunity to ride the two-stroke a couple of times recently and the bike – although not changed in any major way – is a good, solid enduro bike again.

The WR has benefited from an all-new ignition system and this seems to have made a massive difference in the overall package and ease of ride. The power was smooth and linear through the range and this was a new experience for me on the 250. The difference is noticeable straight away as the roll-on ability of the power inspires a confidence to tackle everything in the way. All the way from the first opening of the throttle to the screaming over-rev the bike behaves itself and tries to deliver the goods to the rear wheel.

The chassis is unique in feel with a low front end but grip is easy to find. As with most bikes the time spent getting the body positioning and timing right in technical going is important but the WR gives good feedback straight from the off. The clutch is a little heavy compared to some of

the bikes in the range as it's still cable actuated but the feel is solid so you know the clutch is strongly sprung and therefore robust enough to take a lot of abuse no matter how hard the going gets.

The smoker was feeling good on the sections of the loop where Sutty was snapping the pics and as the rain kept pounding down things were getting a little wild and out of control at times, especially in the bombholes where the final hole of three has a 10 foot undercut exit ramp. Good for trials type riders, pictures and Sutty's smiling chops but not so good for little old me or the bike...oops. But the Husky was fine after its solo ride and I jumped on the 310 to get a good feel for the four-stroke Husky power and chassis before the competition began.

I cannot hide my liking of the 310 Husky as it is one of the easiest bikes to jump on and ride in every style of going. There is a feel from the bike which makes you want to ride it hard and it does not wear you out at all. The seating position is comfortable and easy and the controls are all positive and light at both handlebars and feet.

The fuelling from the injection system is slightly off at the initial part of the rev and this causes a bit of stalling on the tight sections of track until you become aware of it and keep the revs up a tad. This needs to be addressed as the motor is absolutely solid in every way except for this small glitch. The bike may have needed a little more running time but this is not the case with other manufacturers' bikes in this modern fuel injection era. The power output is a pleasure when you get above the stutter and grip is easy to find even from a standing start into climbs. Basically everything about the 310 Husky makes it fun to ride and it does beg to be revved when you get into the faster parts of the track. The Italian revving style comes to the fore on these parts.

So with both bikes ridden and a good feel >>





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The two-fiddy stroker dishes out a surprise helping of whupass!

for the conditions it was time to get serious for a few minutes and hit out two hard and consistent laps on the bikes. Suttly was the official timekeeper and the 310 was up first. I felt good on the bike and the track felt good as the conditions were a great test and challenge to bike and rider to make consistent laps for a true judgement on each. I cut a couple of the extra tight sections of track out to get a good flow on for consistency so it was off on the thumper for a hot lap.

Every inch of the lap was taken in the bike's stride and even with the rain lashing down the grip was fairly easy to find. Surely the two-stroke was going to struggle to win...

The rock section was not taken too aggressively on the 310 but a couple of dabs got us through and on our way. The bombholes were not a problem and the stream crossings were comfortable. In all, the lap on the 310 went smoothly and fairly easily.

Okay. Two-stroke time! I knew the lap on the two-stroke was going to have to be a smoothie as the conditions were getting pretty bad in the open parts of the track. I had to try to replicate the four-stroke lap but also change my style and body position slightly to find grip on the light and lively machine.

To say the two-stroke covers the ground well

is an understatement but with many of the technical sections of track being tight and start/stop into rocks and roots I was worried about the two-stroke tendency to spin up and lose traction compared to the four-stroke. There was no need to worry – the Husky gently grunted up even the most slippery short climbs and tracked like a tank. I was very surprised to feel this and it was a great test of the bike with such a close back-to-back comparison with the 310. Every difference could be felt and although the bikes are completely different they both felt great on the laps and Suttly was keeping the times close to his chest while quizzing me as to how it went with each circuit.

As both laps went well without any major moments I thought the lap on the 310 felt faster as I seemed to be able to push harder on it. Suttly's smile grew as he gave me the result – a 6.08 lap on the 310 four-stroke and six minutes flat on the two-stroker! Now that was a test. I was genuinely surprised but the clock doesn't lie.

I felt faster on the four-stroke but the design and power delivery on the two-stroke while being ridden smoothly took the fastest time of the day. Great stuff and thanks to Dave the Plum and Stuart the Legend at Husky for making the effort to make the test happen.



SPECIFICATIONS

WR250 >>

Capacity: 249.3cc
Bore and stroke: 66.4mm x 72mm
Transmission: Five-speed
Fuel tank capacity: 9.5 litres
Front suspension: Kayaba USD 48mm (300mm travel)
Rear suspension: Sachs (320mm travel)
Front brake: 260mm disc
Rear brake: 220mm disc
Seat height: 975mm
Wheelbase: 1465mm
Ground clearance: 345mm
Kerb weight: 103kg
RRP: £5865



TE310 >>

Capacity: 302.4cc
Bore and stroke: 82mm x 57.35mm
Transmission: Six-speed
Fuel tank capacity: 8.5 litres
Front suspension: Kayaba USD 48mm (300mm travel)
Rear suspension: Sachs (296mm travel)
Front brake: 260mm disc
Rear brake: 240mm disc
Seat height: 950mm
Wheelbase: 1470mm
Ground clearance: 290mm
Kerb weight: 106kg
RRP: £6825

Wakker whips the WR250 – shame he forgot to stay on board





SECOND IMPRESSIONS!

AFTER A HOT DATE IN SPAIN, GODFREY LAYS SOME LONGER TERM LOVIN' ON HUSABERG'S FE390

Words by **Geoff Walker** Photos by **Sutty**

It wasn't all that long ago that I was in a very sunny Spain for the launch of the full 2011 Husaberg range but these occasions are always rushed and I thought it would be good to get more of an in-depth feel of the FE390...

I had the opportunity to get out to the Clermont-Ferrand area of France for three days riding with the mad Molson crew and it was the perfect trip to test the 390. The going would be fast and flowing with a mix of technical climbs and fun, fast n' wet trails. Couple this with a few trips out to The Marsh and some riding at Surfing Life HQ with Fordy, Goldwing and Uncle D and the 30-odd hours in the saddle have given me a good insight into the world of the baby Berg...

After Spain I was a fan of the 390 and this connection with the blue and yellow has grown in the extra time I've been on board since my return. Another good side to getting out riding with your pals is the fact they can have a shot on the bike and give their own insight into the ride. This can sometimes lead to some vehicular damage but that is all part of a thorough DBR test.

With a generator fitted to the Berg that could power a small town the electric start never dies, it keeps on cranking without any drama no matter how many stop/starts you are having.

The bike I had for the test didn't have a fan fitted so it got hot on one occasion. Very little fluid was lost but if you're going into any situation where low-speed technical riding is on the cards then a fan kit would be the first thing I would fit.

At over 6 foot 2 I never felt cramped on the bike, even on the long days. The comfort level is high on the bike even though the seat foam did feel a little soft just back from the mid point of the seat. But maybe that's just my fat ass! Handlebars stayed comfy and hands stayed blister free with the excellent bend and flexibility. The stock bars also did well when Martin 'Buzz Lightyear' Tucker made an ill-fated attempt at the final tech climb of the three days in France. I have never seen a bike go to infinity and beyond before and I have to say it was a sight to behold!

The Berg showed great strength to stay (almost) together after such a maahoosive bit of unpiloted airtime. This 'little' crash from Buzz showed the strength of the Berg and also one small weakness. The e-starter button wires were damaged in the crash so the kickstartless machine had to be bump-started for the final hour's ride back to base. This taught me a lesson in wire protection and if I was racing the Berg a spare e-starter button assembly would be in my bum bag and I would be running some protection on the wire. >>



*Walker and the 390 go
Blair Witch hunting*

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The Husaberg's two-stroke feel just adds to the fun

SPECIFICATIONS

FE390 >>

Capacity: 393.3cc

Bore and stroke: 95mm x 55.5mm

Transmission: Six-speed

Fuel tank capacity: 8.5 litres

Front suspension: WP USD

48mm (300mm travel)

Rear suspension: WP PDS

(335mm travel)

Front brake: 260mm disc

Rear brake: 220mm disc

Seat height: 985mm

Wheelbase: 1475mm

Ground clearance: 390mm

Dry weight: 114kg



At absolutely every point in time on the trails of France the bike was a pleasure to ride and if I am honest at the end of every day I felt fresh as a daisy as the bike's balanced design and ease of ride means your body does not take the usual punishment of a normal long day in the woods and on the trails. To say this bike is easy to ride at any speed on the trails is an understatement.

Back to Blighty and it was time to get the Berg out to Marshfield for some laps of the MX track and the enduro loop as well as down to Cornwall for a thrash at the Surfing Life facility. The 390 took a few laps to get into the MX circuit but the harder I pushed it on the rough track the better it and I felt. Yes, it's way too soft for me to ride MX on and, yes, it's not as quick as an MX bike around there but it performed at absolute maximum and it

does feel good to get on a bike and be able to ride it as hard as it will go.

The bike stays planted and firm on the track and jumps pretty well for a bike with lights on but it comes into its own on my enduro loop and at Fordy's where there's a technical mix of singletrack and cambers to sling it at. So with some tight and technical going, steps, streams, rocks, roots and grass cambers the test was complete.

The most fun about the bike is the lack of engine braking compared to a lot of the enduro four-strokes. The Husaberg 390 offers a great little crossover to a slightly two-stroke feel and it loves to be hammered. So if you're looking to switch from a stroker it may be the perfect puppy.

To sum up the FE390 after over 30 hours of hard riding – superb, strong and a whole lot of fun.



LAST ORDER!

AFTER A PRO CAREER THAT'S BROUGHT GP WINS AND BRITISH TITLES, CARL NUNN'S FINALLY DECIDED TO CALL TIME ON LIFE IN THE FAST LANE...

Words by Jeff Perrett Photos by Ray Archer and Suttly

Where do we start with this one? The obvious answer is at the beginning of course but before we go back to Carl's youth and how his racing career got started let's look at what the man has become today.

In my mind Nunny is one of the best riders this country has produced since what some would argue was the golden generation of Dave Thorpe, Kurt Nicoll, Jeremy Whitley and co. Of course, the likes of Rob Herring, Paul Malin, Jamie Dobb and Mark Eastwood followed but even as they did a young kid from Mildenhall in Suffolk was already on the radar as being the next one to watch.

As much as some may argue with me about that 'golden generation' being golden, I'm sure many would also argue that Carl is one of the best riders to come out of the UK since that time and I can understand why. Although, like Whitley and Herring before him, maybe the results throughout his career don't reflect the sublime and undoubted natural talent at his disposal? Of course, it's all too easy for me sat here getting fatter behind my computer to say that and Carl reached a level as racer I could only dream about.

He may not have won a world championship but then so many don't. He maybe could have won a few more championships but then we can all say we could have achieved more. Where Carl has excelled is the way he's conducted himself throughout his career. He's always maintained a good balance between being Carl Nunn the solid, professional motocross racer and just simply being Carl Nunn, doing his own thing away from the races and keeping his personal life as personal as he can. I've always respected Carl for that and after we had a good long chat about his racing, his loves and his losses I respect him even more. So let's go back to the beginning.

"From day one dad had a shop as a Kawasaki dealer and was running the Chippenham track which the Kawasaki factory boys used a lot. So naturally I rode with them and dad had a good relationship with Alec Wright who ran Kawasaki's motocross programme back then so it naturally went from there. I got on Kawasaki's Team Green programme when I was 10 on a 65cc in 1989 I think. Pretty much since I started riding a bike it's all I've ever known. I mean, I was always going to follow in my dad's footsteps really, it was almost impossible not to with him so involved in the sport. I can remember cheering him on when I was younger – me and my sister used to hang on the fence. I had a Honda QR50 as my first bike and I just nailed the throttle and went through a fence. That put me off for about a year before I rode again!"

Maybe it was that scary moment that made Carl the rider he became? He learned to respect the bike as he mastered technique and it wasn't long before that talent

really started to shine through.

"Alec and everyone at Kawasaki played such a huge, instrumental part of my life in those early years – and not just my racing. I felt at home and they gave me so much support so naturally I'll always be supportive of that. He advised dad on my career, suggesting stuff like moving me up a class earlier even if the ACU were against it. He pushed and made stuff like that happen.

"I had privileges that others didn't – like racing next year's bikes before they came out but that wasn't always the advantage at the time that people thought. He never wanted me to race a tuned bike. I was on an apprenticeship and I had to prove myself. He wanted to show that the stock bike could win too. When I went onto Jan De Groot's JHK Kawasaki team for example he wouldn't let Jan tune the bikes. Jan kept coming to me all apologetic saying 'I'd love to tune your bikes Carl but Alec won't let me do it!' and I think that shows the respect everyone at Kawasaki had for Alec Wright. He made me work hard for what I got so from there on I have always respected and appreciated what I have."

Those JHK Kawasaki years were a huge step in his education to become a pro motocrosser. At 15 years old he was racing far from home with the likes of Remy Van Rees, Davy Stribos and Stefan Everts with a stock 125 motor on sand tracks. But it came to him naturally and I guess it always has?

"I learned to squeeze every bit of horsepower out of my bike from a very early age. It was a steep learning curve but it was a good one. I didn't learn to appreciate that until later in life. From around 12 to 13 I knew that I really wanted to be a motocross racer. I was at school and thought 'I really don't want to be here, this isn't going to help me at all'. Of course I stayed in school – that was important and I'd say that to all kids today – but I knew then that motocross was what I was going to do with my life."

Carl certainly followed that ambition and he's known nothing else but motocross ever since as he heads into his 30s with wife Naomi and children Mia, Harli and Willow.

Like virtually everyone else he has interests outside his job. Carl's hobby is building and racing radio controlled cars but, no question, his focus has been on racing for the best part of his life. That focus really started ramping up when he was offered a ride by this country's most successful rider – Dave Thorpe – racing a season in the European championship in 1995 aged 15 for the Skymasts Honda team and then the following year for the newly formed CAT Honda team.

"It was another boost of confidence when Thorpe offered me a ride. He was so instrumental and I learned so much about the sport working with him. It was difficult to adjust to the discipline and being away from home a lot but if you can't respect someone like Dave and what he achieved then you never will. He taught me >>

Nunny cranks over his new
250F Dixon Yamaha during a
covershoot for the March '07 DBR



discipline, like getting up early and getting your training done so you have the rest of the day to yourself to relax properly. A lot of what he taught me is very true. It was a key moment in my career. I qualified for my first GP – just. Then at my second one I got a 12th and some points and a big weight was lifted off my shoulders. It was a big step forward and I felt at home then.”

Nunny had a relatively successful time with Thorpe and the CAT team but his inexperience meant he started to see problems that weren't really there. He felt like he needed another change to take it to the next level so he ended up signing with the Cadbury's Boost Yamaha team run by Steve Dixon.

“I was thinking that I needed a better bike and that the ones I was racing were holding me back a little – of course, with experience and time I realised that wasn't the case. It was a case of the 'grass is greener' a little bit I guess being young and little bit arrogant in some respects. I thought the only way to progress was to go with a new team and try something new. Going with Steve made sense, [Paul] Malin was there as a GP winner and I'd learn and ride with him. I was 17 years old and thought 'here we go – I'll be on Rinaldi spec bikes'.

“I went to America for month which I found hard being away from home again but I put the work in, focused and everything was shaping up well but then the day after I got back my girlfriend Catherine died in a car crash.”

It stands to reason that such an incident would have a profound effect on Carl. Losing someone close to you will happen to everyone at some point but you rarely expect it and, even if you do, it's still a traumatic experience. It clearly derailed Carl as he went through the motions of life in a daze. He was there at the races but at the same time a million miles away.

“I had about a month before my first race at Foxhill to try and get my head around what had happened. I remember being at Foxhill but nothing about that weekend at all. It felt like a dream, I was just going through the motions. I needed to keep racing or I'm not sure what would've happened to me basically. It was the most difficult time of my life – so many fears, doubts and all sorts went through my head and racing was just something I was doing without thinking.

“My focus certainly wasn't on it at all. I had a lot of people at motocross doing all they could to help and my good friends and family were right

there by my side all the time in those early days, probably to make sure I wasn't going to lose the plot.”

Carl certainly rode the emotional rollercoaster through most of 1998 and following the terrible loss of Catherine's death came the huge high of the British GP at Foxhill. It was the day that Nunny delivered what everyone in British motocross knew he was capable of when he took third overall, lead most of the first race and sent the patriotic British crowd wild. If he ever had any doubts about how popular he was and how much the UK motocross fraternity were behind him they were certainly quashed that day.

“That day was just phenomenal. It was the first time I really had loads of people come up to me in the pits and stop me asking for my autograph and stuff like that. I felt like a superstar but remember still feeling grounded by it all and everything that had gone on before that, especially that earlier meeting at Foxhill. It was crazy really. I felt dialled on race day and my mind was free, it just felt right, like it was meant to be that way. When I passed Chicco Chiodi for the lead it kind of hit home what I was doing, I thought 'I've just passed the world champion!' He then passed me straight back but I was cool



After the disappointment of narrowly missing out on the British title with Trevor Avery's Husqvarna team, Carl signed for MJ Church Kawasaki in '03



FAST TRACK



Battling for the holeshot on the MVR-D Suzuki at Langrish in 2009



Carl won back-to-back British titles for Champ KTM but the factory were more interested in top honours in GPs

NUNNY & RABBITS

REGRETS...

"I didn't learn enough about bike set-up when I was younger. I just rode it and if it was wrong I would just adapt to it and that followed me through my career. When I was practising I'd just ride differently or miss the bumps but when you come to ride world level you can't help but hit those bumps and then you're a second or more off the pace.

"On the days when the bike was working well I shined but on the days it wasn't I didn't have the knowledge to make that difference. That's an obvious regret, other than that I haven't had many. I've now learned more about bike set-up in the last two years than I ever have and I think that's because I've started prepping my own practice bikes. I thought 'this is ridiculous, I work on my RC cars all the time so why can't I do the same on my bikes'."

MVR-D

"The lads are so passionate and it's been a pleasure working with them. It's no secret that we've struggled with the bike set-up a little this year but that's not for a lack of trying. My bike last year was so good and I think it showed in my performance and results. They put their heart and soul into racing and I'm happy to say I've ridden for them. They'd go without food to get me on the startline!"



With respected rival and former team-mate Billy MacKenzie

BILLY MACKENZIE

"When I had my crash at Hawkstone, Billy stopped and put his bike in front of me to protect me during that race. I couldn't believe it. We had some serious battles up to that point and there had been a bit of bitching – we'd been team-mates and battling for titles together but weren't friends as such. It was a great gesture and I'll always respect him for that. I think he's misunderstood."

with it and passed him back again. The crowd were so loud it was unbelievable. I had a job to hear my bike – they were going mental, hanging over the fence and literally screaming!"

That was a key turning point and Carl was on his way. He got another two podium finishes that year and he and everyone else had high expectations for the following season. But it just never really happened.

"I went into the winter confident. We did the Sheffield supercross and Jeremy McGrath was racing out of our truck. I was sat there with him which was cool – I probably never said a word to him though! Anyway, later on I crashed in the final and damaged my shoulder. I carried on riding over the winter and after the first GP in France I got second overall and started to think 'this is it, I can do this, I have a chance here'.

"The second GP was in Italy. I went down on the same shoulder in the first turn and that's when they told me I had previously partly dislocated my shoulder and cracked my socket. I had to miss the next few races and I was totally and utterly devastated."

It was a swing of momentum back the other way for Nunny and he then struggled with niggling injuries that would affect his

preparations and ultimately his performance. Of course, there were highlights over the next two years while he was with Yamaha and Steve Dixon – most notably when he smoked everyone with a 1-1 overall victory at the French GP in 2000. Nonetheless, Carl felt the need for a fresh impetus once again and this time decided that a change of class would also help so he took an offer from Trevor Avery with factory support from Husqvarna.

"I felt the time was right to go up, people were telling me my style would be better suited so I considered it. The bike was phenomenal, no doubt about it – it was the most perfect 250 two-stroke motor you could ever want. We tried our hardest with the chassis to bring it up to speed with the motor but it was dated and we just couldn't get it to turn and that made it difficult with the suspension. Husqvarna were so supportive and made us some seriously special parts but we just couldn't get it quite right.

"The first year with Husqvarna went really well on the British scene but I struggled to settle into GPs. I was a little star struck. I was in with Pichon, Beirer and Everts – that was difficult and I couldn't make that transition quick enough. I lost the British championship that year by one

point to Crookard – it was the year of foot and mouth disease and I should've won but mentally I wasn't strong enough. I'd beaten myself before I'd even got to that last race. Trevor was as Trevor is – 100 per cent – but we couldn't get that new chassis going forward and he felt he was beating his head against the wall so that was the end of that."

He then jumped to Mike Church's Kawasaki team for 2003 and although he didn't really get right in the sharp end of things at the GPs he was always a threat at home but still no British championship to his name for all his talents. Next up was a stint back in the small bike class with RTT Honda in 2004 as the introduction of the four-strokes appealed to Carl's smooth riding talents.

"The RTT Honda team was enjoyable while it lasted. Unlike the other teams everything was close to home – the main workshop and my mechanic were just around the corner and I enjoyed not having to travel so much. I hate travelling with a passion. I had small problems with injuries again but for a new team fresh out of the box it went okay.

"Of course, there were issues throughout the year as the team developed and





NUNNY RABBITS

PRESSURE

"I can't think of any time in my career that I haven't felt pressure. At the end of the day you just have to learn to deal with it. I tried not to let it affect me too much. When I first left school, that's when it hit home. It was like 'this is it now - I've got to start making money!' There's always pressure though, it's a results-based job. It's a short career and you need to try and make the most out of it while you can in every sense."

TURNING PRO

"For as long as I can remember I was always around the likes of Kurt Nicoll and Dave Thorpe so I never really noticed everyone thinking I was the next big thing. The transition to the pros wasn't such a big thing to me, maybe it was because I was racing in Holland and out of the limelight here in the UK at that time? The transition for kids now though seems massive. My first ever GP was a 125GP in Italy and there was 80 riders and you were trying to qualify. I was s***ting myself but now how the system works there's even more pressure on a rider who gets into GPs."

KURT NICOLL

"I trained with Kurt who was Thorpe's arch rival. Kurt was a very difficult person to talk to. He didn't want to talk to me when we were in the gym as he was very focused. I remember having some physio when I was 10 and Kurt was in there the same day and he just did not say a word to me. But once his racing was finished and he was at KTM he was a completely different person and a lot of fun. I guess that was his way of getting focused and getting the results."

KEITH THORPE

"Keith was always really supportive but I think he thought I was more like David than I am. It was usually 'David didn't do this' or 'David did it like this'. I remember thinking 'I'm not David!' but Keith was just trying to help and looking back I realise Keith helped me a lot more than I knew at the time. He's very professional, he definitely played a huge part in Dave's success and he played an integral part in mine."

everyone got to know each other's personalities but it had potential. I was all set for 2005 with them and looking to step it up when I got the call from the owner Rob Bradley in December that the team wasn't going to continue. That was a big blow, especially that late in the day."

It was the first time in his career that Carl had to look for a ride rather than the offer come to him and it turned out to be a blessing in disguise as he went on to have the most successful spell of his career on KTM.

"We made a call to Kevin Burke who was the main man at KTM UK straight away and he got on to it. It worked out that they wanted me to ride their 125 to keep their two-stroke hopes alive. That thing was unbelievable - it was so far ahead of anything else. No disrespect to Langston or Dobby but I could see how it helped them win world titles. Then all their factory 250F riders got injured and they gave me a chance to ride the factory 250F bike.

"They flew me over to Holland, I got on that bike and it was a different level again. I then had to go back and forth to Holland every week because they didn't have a bike that I could have back in England.

Kees Van Der Ven the team manager was good to me and treated me like Tyla [Rattray] or Marc [De Reuver] even though I didn't feel like I was on the team - I felt like I was in the way but it went well. I finished eighth in the world championship and won my first British championship.

"The following year went even better but I definitely felt more pressure. KTM are a serious company, serious about winning. I thought I'd done enough to justify a ride on the team the following year - I had a few podiums and won a British championship - but I basically had to beg them! I guess they just never saw me as a world championship contender and although I finished two places higher in sixth at the end of the year and won the British championship

again I guess they were right."

With Carl seeing the writing on the wall at KTM he knew there was no point trying to haggle for a ride and decided it would be good to cash in on his status as British champion and get a solid ride elsewhere. So after several years of riding for new teams he decided to turn back to one of his previous employers.

"Steve Dixon had already approached me again at that point and I thought 'well I had to grovel last year for my ride so I'm not doing that again'. I knew the bikes would be good and as close as I could get to a factory KTM at the time so I decided to go back with Steve. That winter was the hardest I'd ever trained - I was confident and keen to prove a point. Steve put me onto a trainer called Matt Wilson who was involved with the British Institute of Sport where the Olympians go. I remember ringing Matt after the first two weeks and telling him I couldn't sustain it but he said 'stick at it and in a couple of weeks you'll be into it'. He was right, I was and I felt great. Then I went to the first international of the year at Hawkstone, hurt my back and that was that!"

The crash had more significance than many around Carl realised at the time. It wasn't just his coccyx that was bruised - it was also his confidence. For the first time in his riding career Carl started to have doubts about whether he needed to be racing a motorcycle for a living.

"I knew when I was lying on the ground that day that I wasn't seriously hurt but by the way they handle back injuries and the precautions they take it seriously brought home the point of how dangerous it can be. It took me ages to get the bruising out of my bone - eventually I had to have acupuncture and all through that time I couldn't get the thought of how bad it could've been out of my head."

With his mind not in the right place for most of the year Carl wasn't getting the results that Yamaha and Steve were looking for. But even with a below par season behind him, >>



Nunny rates the 250 Husky he rode in '02 as having the perfect two-stroke engine - but they couldn't get it to turn





His deal with RTT Honda promised much but ended in disappointment

NUNNY RABBITS

COACHING

"I was coaching back in 1997 with my dad and giving tips to people that were older than me and that always felt a bit odd but I grew a lot in confidence by dealing with people. I've been in and around coaching all my life so I'm happy to continue with that. It keeps your mind fresh too with new tips and ways of doing things – you're never too old to learn and everyone should remember that."

BRITISH PROSPECTS

"I would've said this time last year that I didn't see any obvious potential. You've got people like Scott Elderfield that have got a lot of ability and just need that one break. I think it's just that one race for him and he'll be away as the next GP star for our country. Luke Hawkins is applying himself well and has come on strong, I'm impressed with him. It's good to see."

"Then onto the schoolboys there are some riders that have it but it's difficult for them because I think the support within the industry isn't there like it was in my youth. I applaud the MCF for bringing the kids into a professional environment with the Red Bull Pro Nationals, I think that will help. When I was their age there were apprenticeships and deals and if you did well you progressed and it wasn't all about throwing loads of money at it. Some parents can't afford to do that."

BEING A SCHOOLBOY DAD

"I'm dreading it if they ask. I'm the typical over-protective parent – if they fall over I'm right there with a stretcher! What I'd love is if they rode for fun because I went through the pressure of being the son of an ex-professional racer. Don't get me wrong, I'd be so proud to see Harli out there but I'd be s**ting myself all the time because some of those kids get in some shapes out there!"



Carl finished a solid 11th overall in his last ever British GP in '09

a rider of Carl's calibre would be a big signing for the ever-improving MVR-D Suzuki team. So they agreed terms and set about both trying to win the British championship and have a successful GP campaign. But with a smaller budget and resources than many of the teams Carl had been on and the effects of the previous year still lingering it was tough for all concerned.

"Yeah, 2008 was a difficult year. The year before hadn't gone well and as good as it was with MVR-D – being on a new team and having fun again with the lads – everything just seemed a struggle for me and I still had those doubts come into my head too often. I wasn't enjoying the new GP style tracks either and the thought of knocking it on the head was becoming more frequent. Naomi was expecting Willow and I just wasn't feeling it.

"It became more apparent to me that the sport is dangerous. Before I'd never think like that but then I was thinking stuff like 'I don't want to do that jump' but you have to if you're going to be in the running. I'd be waking up Sunday morning at a GP thinking 'I just don't want this anymore'. I was thinking of stupid things you shouldn't be thinking of if you're a pro racer. That comes from being a parent and a provider for the family. If it went wrong for me, what are

they going to do?"

Of course, changing the habits of a lifetime isn't an easy thing to do. Going racing is all Nunny has ever known since he can remember. So he thought long and hard and came to the conclusion that stepping out of the GPs and just concentrating on the British scene would be a good compromise rather than hanging up his boots altogether. He spoke with his team and they agreed that a move back up to the 450 would also help his cause. Of course it did and 2009 was a good year for Carl and the team as they won the Red Bull Pro Nationals MX1 crown together.

"I went into that year with no pressure or expectations – like it wasn't serious because I wasn't doing GPs – and then after the first rounds of championships I was in second in the Maxxis and leading the Red Bulls. After that I thought 'no, this is serious and I want to win them both'. Maybe because I knew deep down it was probably my last chance. I was really pleased to win the Red Bull Pro Nationals and it could've gone better for us in the Maxxis if it wasn't for some misfortune. I was happy and was looking forward to doing it again this year but we just couldn't get the bike as good as the previous year and then I started to get that same

feeling as I did two years earlier at the GPs.

"Those that it's happened to will tell you 'you just know when it's time to call it day'. I'm over it now and I just don't want to do it anymore. I'll have a bike and I might ride the occasional race and try a few enduros, do a bit of coaching. I'll be staying around because I want to see the sport go back to its roots a little bit and get more people into it. It's been good to me and at this point I'd like to say a big thank you to all the people I've met, fans that have supported me and the teams I've ridden for. I feel so privileged to have spent so much time as a professional rider.

"As for all my private sponsors, friends and family that have helped me through my career, I really can't thank them enough. Most of all I will always be thankful to my wife Naomi who has supported me through thick and thin and been there keeping me sane when times were tough. Now above anything else I'm looking forward to spending more time with her and my family. It's been a good run but it's time to bow out and enjoy the rest of my life."

I for one wish him all the best with that and wholeheartedly respect Carl Nunn – the motocross racer and the man. And I'd like to think I'm far from alone on that...



DIDGERIDOO!

AFTER A TURBULENT 12 MONTHS DOWN UNDER WE CATCH UP WITH FORMER BRITISH CHAMPION BILLY MACKENZIE TO FIND OUT HOW LIFE'S TREATING HIM ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD...

Interview by **Matty Muir** Photos by **Matty Muir** and **Rudi Baker**

With the Aussie national and SX championships done and dusted, we catch up with Down Under British wonder Billy MacKenzie to discover his views on a season that's delivered some great results, handed out some nasty injuries and shown plenty of promise...

DBR: So Billy, how would you describe your 2010 season?

BM: "A lot of fun. It's been a lovely change from the chaos of back home and whatnot. It's been great meeting new people, riding nice tracks and gelling so well with the team. I definitely seem to have had the break that I needed after having such a bad 2009 and I've loved every second of it."

DBR: Do you still feel that you made the right decision by coming to Australia to race?

BM: "Yeah, 100 per cent. You know I've talked to a lot of people back home and I know there are a lot of guys struggling for rides and to get the

deals they deserve. And being in a sport that's so dangerous, it's nice to come and enjoy the sport like when I first began racing and at the same time get paid to do it. This is what being here has given me and it has worked out so well. I definitely made the right decision."

DBR: Obviously things didn't go quite as planned on your trip to the US with you coming away injured and unable to compete for most of the SX series in Australia. But is something like another AMA guest ride worth risking a shot at a championship?

BM: "Well providing Kawasaki will let me then yes. I really just want to go and race and go with the flow. I'll follow the path wherever it takes me next and in the case of the AMA ride, well, it just popped up and it was just something I couldn't turn down. Also for next year I want to do the GP at Matterley Basin. My season ends early here and on the calendar it says I can do it. So providing everyone is okay with it that is another opportunity I will pursue." >>



Billy yanks the holeshot at the Aussie SX finale at a wet n' wild Brisbane

With team boss Troy Carroll



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Looking right at home in Brisbane

Billy had a sensational debut in the Aussie supercross series, tying on points for the top step of the podium after blitzing a quality field



DBR: Is a full-time ride in the US series still your ultimate goal?

BM: "I'm not sure. Look, I came to Australia to learn SX. Obviously, if I went and did SX in America at the moment it wouldn't end well, same as Steel City. I wouldn't be prepared enough. With what Australia is offering at the moment and the tracks and the pace being a bit easier than the States it suits me. See how I go – if I'm up the front in next year's series and battling with the top guys then, yeah, I guess it could be a career move."

DBR: In the limited amount of time you got to do SX this year how have you adapted to it?

BM: "It was a bit difficult in the beginning but I feel a lot of that was bike set-up. I didn't have a lot of time after coming back from injury as the team was already so busy with their other riders. Once my team manager Troy Carroll was able to get involved more with me it helped so much. He has the experience and not only helped me with set-up but with my own riding as well. That is when things really started to click and I really started to enjoy it."

DBR: "So second place at your first SX in Australia followed by another second in the next event – were you surprised with those results?"

BM: "Well I was in the first race, very surprised actually because I had not raced since Steel City or even since the last round of MX nationals in August. But I have a good bunch of friends whom I ride and train with and while training with those guys I kind of got a good feeling.

I knew I could do it and I'm glad I did as I can now take that confidence into next year and hopefully do better."

DBR: Do you feel a series like this can benefit European guys new to SX who are looking to make it in the US?

BM: "I'm not entirely sure. I mean there are a few good European series now and being away from home somewhere like this can take its toll. Me, I'm just one of those guys who has always been on the move pretty much since I started racing so I'm not bothered by it but I think some people would probably have a hard time getting used to it here. Overall that's a tough question for me to answer and would more come down to the individual person."

DBR: So what are your plans for the 2011 season and what are you hoping to achieve?

BM: "The plans are to stay here in Australia with Kawasaki – we are in negotiations at the moment and it looks like it's going to happen. Monster have come on board so it looks like it will be an official Monster Energy/Pro Circuit Kawasaki team here in Australia. It will be much the same as Mitch Payton's team in the US and we are working closely with all of the other Kawasaki teams throughout the world sharing info and so on. I really have landed on my feet – I'm in with the best team, on the best machinery and with the best guys behind me. When I look back and see people struggling to find rides over in Europe then I just think to myself, 'hey, I was on the ball and did well.'"



DROPPIN' OFF!

THIS MONTH GORDY SHOWS YOU HOW TO DEAL WITH DROP-OFFS

WORDS BY **GORDON CROCKARD** PHOTOS BY **SUTTY**

With three British Open titles and four GP wins to his name, Gordon Crockard is a bona fide motocross legend – and now he's sharing his secrets with DBR readers. Every month the Crock Star will run through an essential technique for everyone's racing repertoire – this month he's showing y'all how to tackle extreme drop-offs. And when you've read and digested his 10th lesson hook up to www.dirtbikerider.com for a video demo of how to do it...



dirtbikerider.com

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"Here you can see a fine drop-off. I was faced with this at the FatCat extreme enduro course and the sequence of photos really doesn't do the scale of the drop justice, although the technique that is required to execute this type of drop-off is the same for all drop-offs regardless of size.

"The biggest factor that you must respect is the angle the bike will drop down to the ground at. A nosedive will hurt you/humiliate you/ingrain fear in you/lose you positions/lose you prize money/damage your bike. A loop-out will do exactly the same. So, concentrate on the angle your bike is going to drop to the ground at and be sure to stand very proud and strong on the bike for when it lands.

"A back wheel landing is essential and a golden rule to avoid two broken ankles or two snapped Achilles tendons if you land too flat or front wheel first. But too high on the front wheel and you will have a hard job holding on with your arms and hands whenever you hit the ground. The bike will get away from you. The ultimate position to land in is the one you can see in the photo sequence. Look at how I stand central with my legs nearly straight for landing. Yes, nearly straight but definitely not fully straight or worst case locked out straight. My upper thighs are touching the

handlebars as the front wheel is so high on landing and I have to stand forward to the bars so as I'm not hanging off the back of the bike. I need to be upright with my body so I can take the force of the landing with my leg muscles and not my arms.

"I also apply a crack of the throttle whenever I land on the ground. This helps with taking the severe slap out of the impact that the front wheel sends through the handlebars. A non-throttle application landing would be like a dead weight hitting the ground. If you crack the throttle on landing the bike will squirt forward and drive out of the heavy dead landing. Hold on tight at this point!

"One important factor to control the angle at which the bike is going to fly is the amount of rpm you apply on the take off section approaching the drop. Steady mid-range rpm is the ultimate amount to apply. Finding consistent traction is a primary condition you should respect. Wheelspin halts forward drive and will send the bike into a nosedive once you leave the ground. Too much of an increase in rpm will make the bike accelerate and generate a lightness on the front wheel. Once you take off the theme will continue and the front wheel will continue to want to

rise. You then enter into an arrangement where you are out of control and then the front wheel can rise too high and cause you to loop-out and force a crash. The only chance of recovery is to grab some clutch and dab the rear brake during flight. It's not what you want to be relying on as a recovery tactic but that is all you can do to help salvage the consequences of your mistake.

"Drop-offs of this degree and scale are not that common in regular motocross. The bombhole at Hawkstone Park is a good example of where this technique is executed. The only other option on offer at Hawkstone is to ride down the bombhole drop-off like an auld woman. Not cool and not fast.

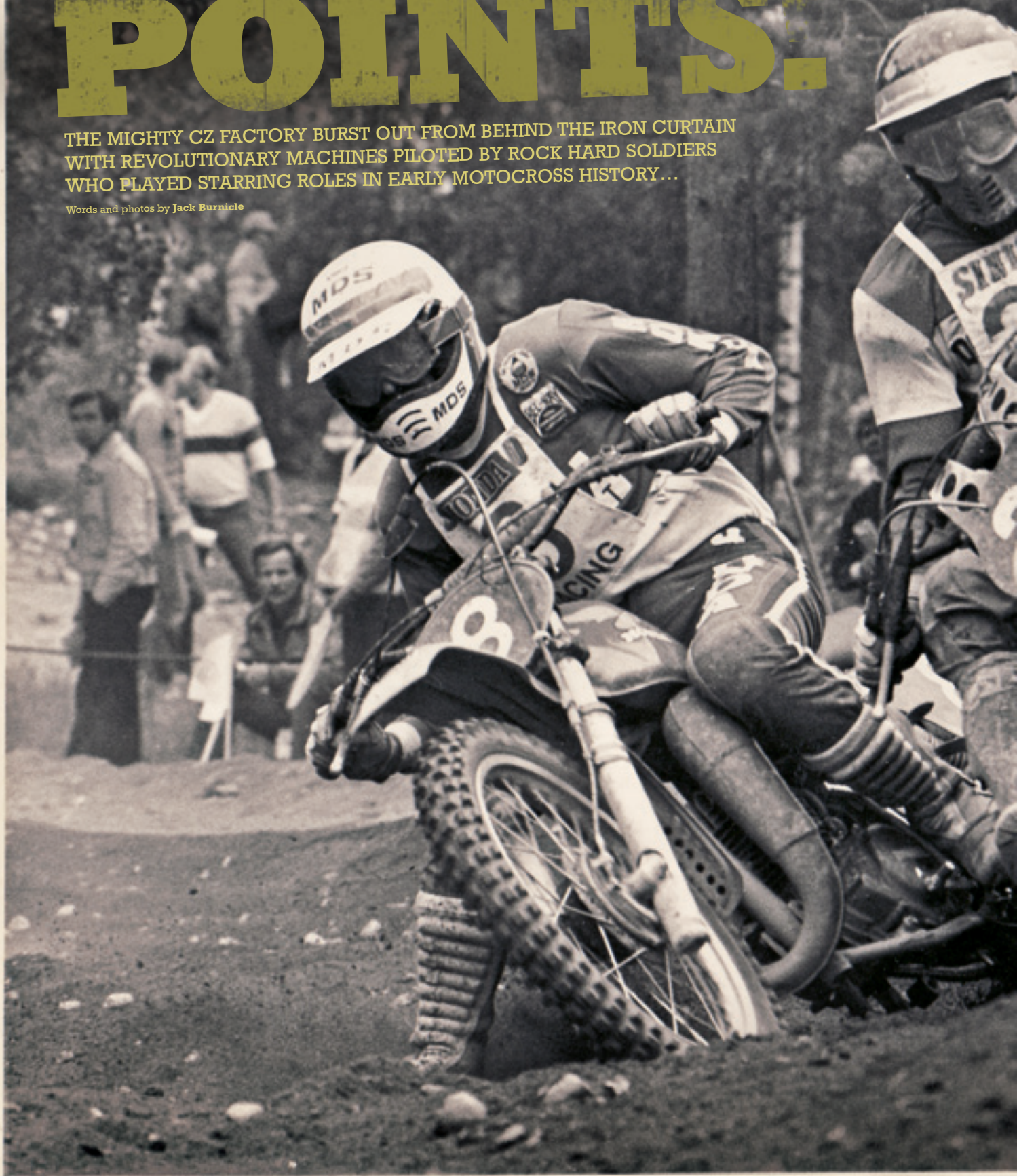
"My suggestion would be to learn these skills on a small drop-off and then build up to larger drop-offs as you develop the skills required. Get this wrong and it will hurt you. Take my advice on that last fact or learn the hard way yourself."

For video footage of Gordy's drop-off technique go to www.dirtbikerider.com or run your smartphone over the QR code...

CZECH POINTS!

THE MIGHTY CZ FACTORY BURST OUT FROM BEHIND THE IRON CURTAIN WITH REVOLUTIONARY MACHINES PILOTED BY ROCK HARD SOLDIERS WHO PLAYED STARRING ROLES IN EARLY MOTOCROSS HISTORY...

Words and photos by Jack Burnicle





JAROSLAV FALTA (CZ, 28) BANGS BARS WITH
EDITZ KORELE (HONDA) IN A THIRD-PLACE
BATTLE AT MYNINKAA'S 1980 FINNISH 250 GP!

Every year the organisers of the Czech Republic Grand Prix at Loket welcome the great Czechoslovakian MX warriors of the past. The former communist Eastern European state used to despatch riders around the world during the 1960s and 1970s. All serving soldiers mounted on CZ motorcycles manufactured at Strakonice (in southern Bohemia!), these hardy pioneers played a major part in the early years of world championship motocross.

Founded in 1919 as the Czechoslovakian Weapons Factory ('Ceska Zbrojovka' hence 'CZ'), a division of Skoda specialising in armaments, CZ started producing small two-stroke motorcycles at Strakonice in 1932.

Nationalised after World War Two, CZ merged with its main rival Jawa in 1948. Together they became the second largest post-war producer of motorbikes in Europe and Jaromir Cizek, riding a Jawa, beat future world champion Rolf Tibblin (Husqvarna) to lift the 250cc 'Coupe d'Europe' in 1958.

CZ's revolutionary twin-port 250 and 360 machines – with new-fangled exhaust expansion chambers – radically altered motocross during the 1960s, out-dating the fat four-bangers that had reigned supreme. They won four 250 world titles with Joel Robert and Russian Viktor Arbekov and a hat-trick of 500 championships for East German policeman Paul Friedrichs. But nine native Czech stars would also win MXGPs for CZ... >>



was armed with his mum's Kodak Brownie camera. After art college he mixed life as a graphic designer, magazine art director, photographer and part-time art college tutor with motocross and photo-journalism. Now he's a commentator, painting pictures with words. He never did get a proper job...

JACK BURNICLE is the godfather (our words, not his) of British MX journalism. Born in Billingham, County Durham, to Bella and nutty (his words, not ours) musical genius Stan Burnicle, Jack was mad about cars and motor racing as a kid. At sweet 16 he got a motorbike, rode it to a local 'scramble' and was instantly, hopelessly hooked. Next time he went he

DESCRIPTION SIGNELEMENT

Beaver	Thulidre	*Wife	Femme
Occupation	GRAPHIC DESIGNER		
Place of birth	BILLINGHAM		
Date of birth	9/9/47		
Country of Residence	ENGLAND		

Usual signature of beaver
Signature du titulaire

Jack Burnicle

Usual signature of wife
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Their first superstar was Vlastimil Valek, who achieved cult status in 1962 by winning the inaugural world championship 250GP held at the fabulous, fearsome Holice circuit. He won there again in 1963 during a season-long duel with defending champion Torsten Hallman's Husqvarna. Valek also triumphed in the Dutch round at The Hague (the only Czech ever to win a GP in sand!), Poland and Russia to end the year just six points shy of Hallman in the table. The only other riders to win all year were Dave Bickers and Valek's CZ team-mate Karel Pilar, victorious at the East German GP in Ken Roczen's home town of Apolda!

Valek won again at Holice in 1965 to claim the Czech track's only grand prix hat-trick and in February '66 led a Czech team to Hutton Conyers, North Yorkshire (the first MX track I ever visited!), to tackle Great Britain in a BBC TV Grandstand International. There he debuted a new 400cc single-cylinder Jawa in a quagmire as the Czechs demolished a British squad led by 500 world champion Jeff Smith! Star of the show was 19-year-old Petr Dobry (his surname means 'good') who won both races on a 250 CZ. Dobry went on to finish third in the 1966 250 world championship and was victorious at the Austrian and East German GPs but then followed a six-year hiatus before a dashing new generation of Czech mates burst on to the scene headed by 22-year-old Jaroslav Falta.

A slim, scrawny youth, Falta was an enigmatic Piscean who drove farm tractors as a kid in northern Bohemia, turned to trials as a 15-year-old on a 50cc Jawa (what else!) and, when his older brother Jiri started scrambling, followed suit. Spotted by a coach at the Dukla army camp outside Prague, he joined up a year ahead of national service and was hired by the CZ factory. Czech 250 champion in 1970, he became under-21 European champion the following year and entered GPs in 1972. Lean, spectacular and very quick, Falta dramatically broke the Czech drought at the first grand prix I ever saw – the British 250 round at Dodington Park near Bristol. He finished ninth in the series before travelling with team-mate Antonin Barborovsky to America where they placed fourth and fifth in the 1973 Inter-AM championship. Falta then improved to sixth in the 250 GPs, though it was his pal Jiri Stodulka who won the opening 500cc round in Sittendorf, Austria, with a resounding double.

CZ returned to the USA and dominated the 1974 Inter-AM, Falta finishing second to his new team-mate Zdenek Velky. But it was on June 22 1974 that Jaroslav Falta became an American icon when he won the Los Angeles Coliseum's Superbowl of Motocross – the first foreign visitor to win a round of the AMA SX series! By then he was also enmeshed in one of the most controversial world championships in MX history.

Torleif Hansen (Kawasaki), Harry Everts (Puch), Sylvain Geboers and Gaston Rahier (Suzukis) and Czech Miroslav Halm's CZ all won GPs but Falta and Russian Gennady Moiseev (KTM) were the most consistent contenders. In a brilliant British round at rocky Ladies' Mile, near Portsmouth, Falta suffered a puncture when leading the second race and mechanical gremlins sidelined him in Czecho, Poland and Germany. But he won at Gallarate in Italy and after Valkenswaard's penultimate round arrived for the Swiss finale at Wohlen second in the table, 16 points behind Moiseev.

Falta holeshot the first moto but was badly baulked by Moiseev and his Russian henchmen when trying to lap them. The courageous Czech still salvaged third behind Harry Everts before leading the second race charge ahead of a first turn pile-up. Moiseev dramatically slowed with engine trouble and the Russian antics began again, late entrant Viktor Popenko T-boning Falta clean through the wooden trackside fence. Yet Jaroslav clawed his way back to win a sensational race from Everts and 30,000 fans and all Falta's rivals celebrated a new world champion.

But the Russian Federation contentiously protested that he'd jumped the start. Penalised 60 seconds by a spineless FIM jury (ruled by a race director who was also the Swiss KTM importer), Jaroslav dropped to eighth in the race and second in the table, six points behind Moiseev who secured KTM's first world title.

Falta came back fighting, winning the opening Austrian GP of 1975 before being sidelined for the season by an infection of the spleen. Meantime cheery, big-chinned Zdenek Velky entered the grand prix winners' circle, conquering the French and West German 250GPs. Also, the inaugural 125 world championship saw Barborovsky win the Canadian GP at St Gabriel in Quebec. And in September, with Falta still recuperating, a quartet comprising Barborovsky, Velky, Novacek and Jiri Churavy welcomed the Motocross des Nations to Czechoslovakia for the first



CZECH ANTONIN BARBOROVSKY (24) FINISHES RUSSIAN VLASTIMIL VALEK (24) FOR THIRD PLACE IN THE 1974 BRITISH 250 GP AT NEWBURY'S FOX HOUNDS



JIRI CHURAVY + THE FINAL FACTORY CZ IN THE SPANISH 250 GP, 1980

time and won a sensational victory, their only one ever, defeating the powerhouses of Belgium and Great Britain!

Our Czech heroes generally preferred fast, slick, hard-pack tracks and the red hot, dusty 1976 French 125GP at Cassel, near Calais, was no exception. The hottest summer on record, it was also my first Continental grand prix and, along with 30,000 roasting French fans, I witnessed world champ Rahier collapse with heat exhaustion, US champ Marty Smith snap his Honda's chain and Zdenek Velky emerge victorious ahead of team-mate Churavy and Husqvarna's Roger Harvey. Velky also broke the record for the longest ever jump over the Girling Leap at Hawkstone Park's 125GP that year – before breaking his back wheel! But the short, stocky Churavy won the final round at Stribo in Czechoslovakia to finish second in the series ahead of zippy little Zdenek...

In 1977 Barborovsky hijacked the Czech 250 round at Holice en-route to sixth in the world championship, three places in front of Falta. And in 1978 Jaroslav, ninth again, won his last grand prix at Schwanenstadt

and handsomely led the West German round at Beuerne until his fragile CZ shed its chain with three laps to go. But the personable, perennially popular Falta continued to win races, beating Hakan Carlqvist at Sabadell's Spanish opener in 1979.

A crisis in the communist economy had by then halted progress at the State-owned company yet, campaigning a positively agricultural 250, Falta flew into 1980. He won back-to-back races at Sabadell and Holice and led the world championship after three rounds before a mixture of crashes, mud, mechanical failures and a puncture combined to push him down to seventh, his final rostrum finish round the fast, sandy whoops of Hyvinkaa in Finland.

Jaroslav Falta wouldn't turn 30 until March 1981 but by then he, Churavy, Velky and CZ had melted back behind the Iron Curtain, leaving us only rich recollections of a golden generation. When the Berlin Wall finally fell in 1989 CZ were bought by Cagiva. But the Italian company went bust in 1997 and after 65 years CZ ceased producing motorcycles and started making gearboxes – for Skoda cars!

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DOWN SIZING!

THIS MONTH OUR TECH ED TAKES ONE FOR THE TEAM – THAT'S TEAM SHORT ARSE – AND SETS ABOUT LOWERING A 2011 KTM 125SX...

Words by **Geoff Walker**

Just how low can you go? Well when it comes to dirtbikes and making them fit a rider's size we at DBR tech HQ know no bounds! We are all different shapes and sizes on this here planet so why should we not modify bikes to fit the sometimes small and sometimes larger variety of human?

I have re-sprung, re-valved and set up hundreds of bikes in my time but I've never made a bike massively smaller to suit a particularly vertically challenged pilot. My aim with this project was to go as low as possible while retaining a good level of rideability.

The chosen bike is, as you can see, a lovely 2011 KTM 125SX. The KTM is known to be quite a tall bike so this is a brilliant project to take on. I was aiming to take between 120-130mm off the seat height of the bike which is a massive amount and to be honest it was a bit of a head-scratcher as to how I could get this level of lowering and retain a balance across the bike.

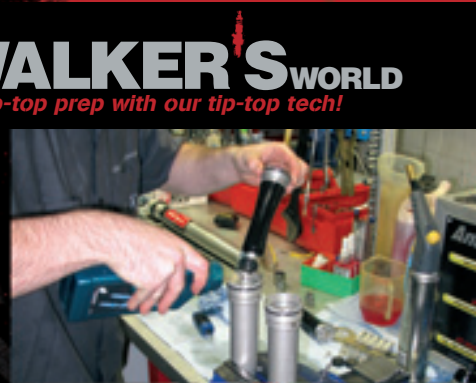
There was only one thing for it – a call to Chris and the motorsports department of Fox Shox suspension importers and specialists MOJO in sunny South Wales. These guys are tooled up to the max for personalisation of suspension units with a vast range of engineering

machines to get the job done. Factory Tim is the man with the tools at MOJO so as soon as I got there it was flat-out to get the seat height measurement and the shock and forks stripped out of the KTM. The seat height is 992mm as stock and the challenge was on to see how much we could realistically lower it...

We started with the shock as the basic element of the lowering process is to space the internal shaft of the unit to restrict the travel slightly. This is possible by using a spacer block which has to be machined from a solid piece of high grade nylon bar. The shock has to be completely stripped to make this possible. The spacer is obviously the key to the lowering process and it is not just a matter of popping a lump of nylon in the shock.

The material has got to be completely resistant to oil and pressure so this high grade nylon does the trick. The block must be machined to length and also be milled to produce oil flow channels to allow the shock's flow characteristics to stay as intended by the manufacturer. These channels are formed using the milling machine and are cut across both ends of the spacer block. As the flow is not affected the shock will perform perfectly.

With the spacer machined and fitted onto the shaft



the rebuild is made using the high-tech oiling and pressurising units. Very high-tech and very expensive machines which pretty much allow the shock to be filled with oil, bled of all air and pressurised with the required nitrogen! Superb...

With the shock rebuilt and fitted, the forks were split down to the bare bones as the internal chamber main shaft has to be fitted with the spacer. With the forks the spacer again has to be machined from solid nylon. It is not just as simple as popping the spacer on the shaft and re-building the inner chambers. The spring carriers and retainers both had to be machined to allow the fork spring to run without added pre-load. Basically, with the lowering of the fork length the spring would be under too much pressure if the retainers were not machined to bring the amount of pre-loaded pressure to the correct amount intended by the manufacturer.

Yes, this is a lot of work but customising to this level is well worth it – being on a correctly 'sized' and well-handling bike can make a world of difference when it comes to building confidence.

The forks' internal chambers are rebuilt and bled through. The forks are then completely rebuilt and

refitted into the bike. The lowering level was easy to see at this stage and the balance looked and felt good across the little Toomer. So it was a fond farewell to Chris, Tim and the MOJO massive and back to DBR Tech HQ for the final setting and seat modification to get the bike to its lowest.

The bike was low – but not quite low enough. We wanted more so it was off with the seat and with the cover whipped off I marked an area on the seat foam and carefully cut out the section. It is important not to go too mad with this cut and be very careful when you are cutting to keep it even. An electric carving knife is great for the job but I didn't have one at HQ so a hacksaw blade was brought in to do the business. The KTM seat cover is a flexible unit so it is easy to re-staple into position making the job look like it was done at the factory.

So there we have it – the lowering experiment went well and as you can see the difference is big! The overall drop in height when I had set the sag and made all the final settings across the bike was around 120mm at the seat. That's a big drop and with the units working perfectly team short arse are hitting the tracks and trails ASAP!



THIRD TIME LUCKY?

AFTER TWO FALSE STARTS TO HIS 450cc CAREER,
RYAN VILLOPOTO LINES UP FOR THE 2011 SX SERIES
FEELING FITTER THAN EVER...

Monster Energy Kawasaki's Ryan Villopoto was touted as being the giant-killer heading into the 2009 season. He had won three consecutive 250cc national MX titles and dominated the Motocross des Nations but 2009 saw him come down with illness during supercross, then dominate the series opener for the AMA 450cc Nationals before blowing out his knee practising before round two. He attempted to race round two anyway but it wasn't to be. He pulled out of the series.

In 2010 Villopoto came into the season overweight. He was a good 20 pounds heavier than he should've been to start the season. "It's a bit embarrassing to look back at that," Villopoto says. "I didn't realise at the time how out of shape I really was. I could still put in 20 good laps but..."

Villopoto raced his way into shape and it wasn't long before he started putting together wins. He caught eventual champ Ryan Dungey in the points standings, then had a big crash, clogging his exhaust pipe with dirt. Still, near the end of the series Villopoto was dominant. He was winning at will – when he didn't crash – and was reeling Dungey back in for the second time when, in St. Louis, he went down on a dangerous jump combination that also claimed Ivan Tedesco in the same Main Event. Villopoto was leading at the time and pulling away but the result was a badly broken leg and the series was over. Dungey was the champ.

"I was bummed out – everybody was. It wasn't like it was just a broken arm, it was a pretty bad injury. The first thought was to get it fixed right because it was my ankle too that they had to put back together. At the time I was most bummed about the actual injury. As time passed losing the championship was what really made me bummed."

And it wasn't just losing the supercross championship – for the second season RV was unable to take on the outdoors which is his definite strong point. With Villopoto in the line-up Dungey definitely wouldn't have won 10 of the 12 rounds like he did. And may not have won the title.

"I wish we would switch supercross with outdoors,"

Villopoto laughs. "If we could flip-flop it, then that would be cool. I'd love to get outdoors done first! He [Dungey] wouldn't have won 10 if I wasn't hurt. I'm not going to sit here and say he wouldn't have won the championship because he possibly could have but he would not have won 10 overalls."

But all of this has culminated in a big change for Villopoto – he's hired Aldon Baker for 2011 and beyond...

Aldon Baker is easily the most successful motocross/supercross trainer in the world today. First, he joined up with a chubby Ricky Carmichael in mid-2000. After Baker came on board with Carmichael he never lost another championship he intended to compete for. The only championships he didn't win during that stretch from 2001 until 2007 were the 2004 SX championship (in which Carmichael didn't compete due to a pre-season knee injury) and the 2007 supercross and motocross championships (in which Carmichael only competed part-time as a sort of farewell tour). Every championship that Carmichael intended to compete for he won.

That's why Carmichael is considered the GOAT but Aldon Baker's role was key. By the end of his career, chubby Ricky Carmichael was known as being the guy who worked the hardest and was in the best shape. Many fans and pundits who say this is why RC won seem to forget his five national championships that came while he was still chubby but, regardless, the addition of Aldon Baker turned an established champion into the most dominant figure in US motocross history.

After that, Baker was quickly snatched up by James Stewart and Stewart immediately became just as dominant, becoming only the second racer to go 24-0 in outdoor moto wins in a single season. He did it in 2008, his first year with Baker, after sitting out the supercross season with a knee injury. He then won the 2009 SX title in his first year as a supercross-only racer on the L&M Yamaha team. He was hurt early in 2010 or else Baker's undefeated streak may have continued.

Still, in championships where Baker's racers have been uninjured, Baker is still completely undefeated. And Villopoto now has Baker in his corner. ♦

Ryan Villopoto pounds through the whoops at Kawasaki's SX test track — after two seasons disrupted by injury he's determined to make it third time lucky on the 450



Racer X's editors at large. He knows the sport and its personalities like few others and as our US Editor provides insight straight from the Stateside scene...

Steve Cox is an American moto-journalist who follows the entire AMA SX/MX tour. Since moving on from US weekly Cycle News he's struck out on his own to do the freelance thing and recently became one of

STATESIDE



Ryan and Jake have a great friendly rivalry

FRIENDLY RIVALRY

MATES WITH JAKE...

Believe it or not, rookie Jake Weimer has been a great addition to Villopoto's inner circle as Weimer's feel on a 450cc bike is already top-notch and up until his injury he helped Villopoto with testing quite a bit more than any team-mate Villopoto has ever had.

"You know, we had Chad on the team last year and I don't think we really had a whole lot in common," Villopoto says. "With Jake on the team I think everything flows well. I think everybody is working together and it's good because we can share anything about the bike or tyres or whatever we think. We can go back and forth and see what he likes and what I like and what he doesn't like and what I don't like because obviously our bikes are real similar. Together, I think we made the bike better."

But even though they share a trainer, a team and even a gear company – both are sponsored by Thor for 2011 – racing is still racing.

"We're team-mates so there's obviously more respect there but I think anything goes other than trying to mess each other up on the track or like a hard block pass. We aren't going to try and slow each other down. I think it's really just about getting around each other, whoever is passing who. If it's him passing me or me passing him, I think we both know how that works."

"I've definitely changed and I hired him for a reason," Villopoto says. "He's been locked down for so long. He was locked down with Ricky and before anybody knew it when they split James hired him and locked him down. There's really nothing anybody could have done. Once I knew about it [Stewart parting ways with Baker] I knew that I had to jump on it because I knew Dungey wanted him as much as I did, or more. I knew that I needed to change something in my programme because these last two years haven't been what I wanted or what the team has wanted so I have to definitely turn it around."

Although the first race is yet to be run at the time of writing this story, Villopoto already looks like a new man. He is noticeably thinner and more physically fit. Going into Anaheim 1 in 2010 Villopoto weighed nearly 180 pounds. Now he's 155.

"Before I decide to work with a racer, the first thing I look at is their desire to win," Baker says. "I think that with Ryan, I get a lot more similarities to Ricky. He really wants to win just like Ricky did and even his structure is very similar – what makes him kind of tick and even little habits that he has. He's very similar to RC. I didn't see any of those major bad habits in a guy like James. I don't think James ever really had a weight problem to be honest. I think one of the hardest things for RC was keeping his weight right and I think that's going to be something for Ryan, too. So that's where I see a lot of the similarities. But yet in the actual riding and wanting to do better and challenging themselves continually, I find them very similar."

Baker also wants a guy who has a big upside. If he had signed up with Ryan Dungey it's kind of a lose/lose. If Dungey wins in 2011 with Baker on as trainer it will just be 'well Dungey is still winning'. Dungey gets all of the credit. And if Dungey loses people will look to what changed. But with Villopoto the upside is big. And add to that the fact that

Villopoto is allowing Baker to work with some of his friends, too – most notably his new 450cc team-mate Jake Weimer (who broke his arm in the run-up to the SX season opener).

"Ryan realises that he has a lot of potential that he hasn't put together – and obviously some injuries didn't help – but he knows he needs to make those areas better so it's good," says Baker. "From my end, getting approached by him, I always knew he was a talented rider and has a lot of potential but I felt also that that hasn't been fulfilled. When my deal changed with James and then he approached me it was a good fit because Ryan was at the right place to do the work and put it in and stay committed to it. I'm pumped and I kind of feed off the riders I deal with. I'm pretty serious and get pretty involved. It's good to feed off of a guy that is committed, that wants to do it right and also has all of the ingredients to do it. So I'm pretty happy and excited."

Villopoto won more supercross events in 2010 than anyone even though he missed the last three rounds altogether. "I think it all starts with looking at the guy and factoring if he has the ingredients to be a winner and be a champion," Baker says. "Obviously, we know he has because he has won, even though I don't think he's put himself always in the best position to do it – but that's my own personal feeling. So, that shows that he's got it and has huge potential but I always also look at the big picture."

"When you have everyone running on all cylinders then it's maybe a lot tougher and you've got to be better prepared for that. So I always look a little bit down the line with what the challenges are possibly going to be and I think that he can definitely take it on. I think he's got still a lot to prove."

"Even though he didn't have a bad season at all until that crash messed him up, you still have to be in it to win it. That's part of it. So I think even in areas in that department getting him better prepared will hopefully prevent that kind of stuff from happening."

RV dominated on a 250F but his switch to the big bike class has been a troubled one





With top trainer Aldon Baker in his corner Ryan's fitter than ever



In a sport this physical if he was in better shape who knows? Maybe he doesn't crash in St. Louis at all..."

Of course, Villopoto still has some days when he doesn't want to do the work Baker has for him.

"I always use RC as an example whenever they [Villopoto, Weimer, Tyla Ratray and Blake Baggett] start to give me a little bit of lip or whatever. I always say 'look at his records - he was supposed to be not such a good supercross rider but yet how many championships has he gotten?'. You know, they all give you lip - same as RC.

"With Ryan, he's just come off an injury so he hasn't been able to do huge amounts. I've had to give him a little bit of leeway but I still see all of the similar habits and stuff that need to be fixed and that can at least put him in a better position to be more consistent and be ready for the challenges that he has to take on."

So with Baker on his case, his leg healed (although it's still occasionally sore), the Kawasaki factory team in his corner and a new team-mate who is also one of his best friends in Weimer,

Villopoto has no more excuses. He can either beat the best in the sport in Ryan Dungey, James Stewart, Chad Reed and the rest of the field or he can't.

With the most anticipated race of the year only days away at the time of writing, Villopoto has made drastic changes. Being in shape will make him more confident but will the changes pay off?

"It's definitely going to feel different but it's still going to be the unknown," Villopoto says. "It's the unknown every year when you show up at Anaheim I and see who's going to be doing what. You basically kind of know, though. Nobody is really going to change up everything and be totally different. You know that James [Stewart] is going to be fast and you know how Chad [Reed] is going to be. Everybody knows they're going to be good but to what extent? Are they just going to blow everybody away?"

"Nobody really knows that but we do know that Dungey is going to be in, we know Chad is going to be in, we know James is going to be in. I mean, I'm still definitely going to be nervous and wondering.

Nobody knows what's going to happen until the gate drops."

When asked to put the nerves into perspective for the average fan Villopoto says it's impossible. "You really can't. Obviously you're nervous but nobody will ever know what it's really like until they actually go down there and line up to do it. But once the gate drops the majority of it goes away and you just do your thing. You feel it a bit more when you're in a heated battle but almost all of it goes away when you're racing."

In the end, RV hopes to have a successful SX season and then get to the outdoors healthy where he thinks he can do the most damage, regardless of whether or not he wins in supercross.

"I lost weight and basically I'm just doing Aldon's programme," Villopoto says. "It's working for me and I feel the best I've felt since I've been on the 450 - two years now. I'm looking forward to it and I'm interested to see where I'll be when we show up and start racing. I know it's going to pay off but I hope that it pays off big because our goals are big..."

SWITCH HITTER!

AFTER A DIFFICULT DEBUT IN AMERICA, TOMMY SEARLE'S PLANNING ON MIXING IT UP IN THE WEST COAST LITES SX SERIES BEFORE COMING BACK TO EUROPE TO WIN THE MX2 WORLD TITLE...

Once upon a time Tommy Searle was one of the brightest prospects in all of motocross. But after really only one season spent injured most of the time, faith in Tommy Gun has been lost and he finds he has to prove himself a second time.

In order to do that, Searle has grabbed up a ride on the Pro Circuit-backed CLS Kawasaki team for 2011. He will race the 2011 Lites West SX series Stateside before heading back to Europe to take another stab at the MX2 world championship where he has twice been runner-up.

We caught up with Tommy out at the supercross test tracks in Southern California as he trains and tests for his second season of supercross racing.

DBR: Tommy, obviously you had a lot of success at a young age in the GPs. It seemed like you always wanted to come to the USA and race in the AMA, though, right?

TS: "Yeah. I was happy where I was but that was the plan."

DBR: Now that you've actually gotten here and started racing you've had a tough run of luck with injuries – pretty much the toughest time you've had in your career so far...

TS: "Yeah, 2010 has been pretty tough. I mean, up until then I had a good run of luck so it kind of sucks to be trying to fight back from injury and know where you can be but you can't quite get there. It's not good."

DBR: Confidence is big in racing so how do you deal with those sorts of setbacks?

TS: "At first you have to give yourself time. That's the whole thing. After I hurt my shoulder in supercross I actually got healthy and got to go and practice again in supercross. I felt better than I ever did and was getting ready to come back, then I spoke with the guys at KTM – the bosses from KTM in Europe – and they said they wanted me to focus on outdoors."

"So that was the goal and I had a lot of time to build up for it. I mean, we thought the diagnosis with my shoulder was good but obviously it wasn't quite where it should have been and then we carried on riding and stuff like that and it felt strong but I don't think it was quite there. You just have to give yourself time and then build your confidence back up."

"I had a lot of time to get back to ready. I came in swinging – very confident – and even though I hadn't ridden with many guys I knew where I was and I knew that I was going to be fast just from how I felt. I felt like I had never felt before on a bike and I knew the bike well and our bike was working well. I knew I put in the effort, just doing my motos and stuff, so you get confidence from that. Then I came into Hangtown and it went really good. I could've won the first race but I settled for second because I didn't want to be greedy in the first national moto of the year."

"In the second race we had a problem with the shifter and I ended up going down, just from being in the wrong gear and washing out. Then I hurt my shoulder again and we still wanted to win the championship so I didn't have time to recover. I was riding injured. I had like seven days to get ready for the next race when ideally it should have been like nine weeks at least so I couldn't even hold on to the bike. That's when it started down from bad to worse. When you're trying to race injured and you can't train, you can't ride, you can't do anything..."

"In the end we were like 'all right, we tried to race and it's not working' so we decided to sit some races out and then get ready. I started to feel like my old self but the Thursday before that first race back I had a small hiccup in a turn and landed on that same shoulder. Just because my shoulder was that sore still, it was just unfortunate I landed on the same one and it got beat down a few times then that was it, really."

DBR: You can spend five straight seasons healthy but then you have one season where you get hurt two or three times and all of a sudden you're regarded as being injury-prone...

TS: "Yeah, I know, that has kind of happened. I was 16 when I started racing GPs and the first pro race I ever missed was in 2010. That was the first race I ever missed that I should have been competing in over six years. Like you say, you have a couple of injuries and a few unfortunate things happen because you're trying to come back too soon and then everyone is like 'he always gets hurt'. I think that's with any sport and with any people. If you're not doing good then people soon forget."

DBR: Ultimately, you're still Tommy Searle – it's not like you got lucky for so many years and now the truth has come out. You're a great motorcycle rider but sometimes racers forget that when they're injured...

TS: "You see yourself in videos and you're like 'f**k! You don't realise that when you're injured some stuff seems so hard to do. Even if you've just got a sore shoulder and you're looking at a video you watch yourself do it and think 'I'd never be able to do that stuff' – it's how it is, then you get strong and get better and everything comes back so quick. Even when I first started riding a few weeks ago I was thinking 'damn, I've got some work to do, I'm not feeling so hot right now' but the next day and the next day go by and all of a sudden everything starts coming back."

DBR: It can't make it easier that you're switching to a completely new bike when you come back...

TS: "I don't know. I'm really happy with where I am now on the bike. I have good people around me and that also helps knowing you have the right people around you."

Tommy's back on a Kawasaki and, once the SX season is finished, will be back in Europe racing the GPs



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DBR: That's also a confidence thing, right? It's like if you train really hard a lot of the benefit of training hard isn't necessarily your VO2 max, it's that you know you trained that hard so you know you can push in a race...

TS: "Yeah, that's the main thing. As long as you know you can do 40 minutes and you know you've worked hard. If you know you've done everything you can that's all that matters and you're heads up on everyone else because not many people do everything they can to get ready."

DBR: Talk about how this deal came together to ride for the CLS team.

TS: "We were talking with an American company and this and that and they were really interested but I saw the guys [on the CLS team] were getting results. This year there were options to go back and I want to win a world championship before I'm too old to be in that class. I have two years to do that so I want to go back and do that. I could have raced here [in the US] again. I had plenty of offers with good teams but that's what my goal

is and I want to do that now.

"With the bike and the team that are around me it's a good opportunity to go there and [still] have the opportunity to race SX. It's a good deal for me. Since then I've met all the guys from the team and I'm excited. With the people we have on the team I'm really confident that we're going to have a great bike and I'm really happy to be where I'm at."

DBR: Obviously, Mitch Payton and Pro Circuit have a reputation for strong bikes and knowing that you're going to the line and nobody's bike is stronger than yours has got to help, right?

TS: "Every little piece helps so if you've done your work, if you've got the bike, if you've got the people around you, then you know you're 100 per cent and you're ready to go race. I think also I lacked a little bit since I've been in America because I haven't had those people around me that I had when I was in Europe since I came out here by myself."

DBR: You need to have people around you that are going to help get you there. But I think that racers in

general want to believe that they do it on their own because it's an individual sport when you're out on the track...

TS: "Yeah, that's the thing. You do but then if you look at anyone that's doing well, like Dungey, there's probably 10 people behind him that are there helping him. He has his family there, he has his trainer there, he has the tracks. There are people all around him that make him what he is. That's why he succeeded, because every piece of his puzzle is there. I've been lacking that since I've been here so I think that's also why I wanted to go to Europe, so I get those people around me and I get the guidance I need to get my feet back where they need to be. I can work hard knowing that everything is in the right place again."

DBR: Can we expect to see you back in the US full-time one day? Is that what you're hoping?

TS: "Yeah, I'm sure I'll be back. My deal in Europe is for one year and when that's up then I'll see how that goes. If I win the championship then for sure I'll be back in 2012."



Tommy's outdoor season was hampered by injuries





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With a supercross season under his belt Tommy knows what to expect



Tommy Gun – shooting for the top on both sides of the Atlantic

DBR: What do you expect for yourself? I saw you at the test track and you looked good – legitimately good. How much more comfortable do you feel? How much of a difference do you feel from last year doing supercross?

TS: "I think again it's the whole confidence thing. I wasn't great at supercross last year and it didn't go the way I wanted but I rode it and I trained it and I spent plenty of hours at the test track riding SX so that did help. Right now I'm just lacking a bit of bike time but when I go on the supercross track I feel comfortable instead of being a little scared in some sections. Now I have that confidence to just do it and do it to the best of my ability."

DBR: It seems like American supercross has a reputation in Europe for hurting your riders. But if you get with a good team and if you're a great motocross rider you should be able to do it don't you think?

TS: "That's true. It's just riding the bike on a different sort of ground. There is also a lot to learn but like you say that learning curve is a lot

easier if you have the right guidance."

DBR: It's just like when you're a kid. When you're trying to learn motocross for the first time, if you have people around you who are instructing you and steering you in the right direction then you're going to come along a lot quicker. It's just common sense..

TS: "That's true. That was kind of not the case with me because my dad didn't race bikes and my brother didn't race bikes. We kind of did it as a family and none of us had a clue what we were doing. We just went to the races each weekend and went from there so we kind of got lucky."

DBR: That's interesting because it seems like the majority of racers nowadays, their dad or somebody raced. Like the guys at your level, it seems like almost everybody had a family member that raced previously.

TS: "I know, normally someone has raced but in my case it was different."

DBR: So how did you convince them to let you ride dirt bikes?

TS: "I can't even remember to be honest. I think maybe a friend of my dad's wanted to sell him a bike. We got it for Christmas, me and my older brother. We just rode around the garden and went from there, really. When you're young your family encourages it as much as you do. Like, I wasn't pestering. I wasn't like 15 and saying I wanted to race. I was five and they obviously enjoyed going to the races at weekends. It gave them something to do as a family and we did it like that."

DBR: To round it out, what are your expectations for supercross? You've been there, you've seen it, so you've got to know more what to expect this year. What do you expect from yourself?

TS: "I expect to be fighting for race wins. That's where I'm going to put the effort in to be and that's where I want to see myself. I don't expect to be riding around below the top five, you know? If the riding and training goes well and the build up to that I'll be on the podium I'm sure."





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Davi Millsaps has been discarded by the Honda factory team and for 2011 is lining up for Joe Gibbs Racing



MISSION POSSIBLE?

CAN JOE GIBBS RACING SUCCEED WHERE THE HONDA FACTORY HAVE FAILED AND GET THE BEST OUT OF THE ENIGMATIC DAVI MILLSAPS?

Words by STEVE MATTHES Photo by REDBULLPHOTOFILES/GARTH MILAN

Joe Gibbs Racing entered the scene a few years ago to much hype from fans of motocross. The NASCAR team owned by legendary NFL coach Joe Gibbs were taking an unconventional approach to building a team for a sport – or at least unconventional to the normal but not unconventional if you really sit back and think about it.

Coy Gibbs, son of Joe, invests a lot of time and money into the team to try and make it the best that it can be. JGR want wins and titles and want to be right there next to the mighty Japanese factory teams. They have the equipment, the know-how and the personnel to make it happen in many people's eyes. The one thing that the team might be lacking is the one thing that's the most important and that's the riders they hire.

The team have won some races with the talented but sometimes unfocused Josh Grant and certainly have a 'steady rider who's a good guy and going to be a podium threat' in Justin Brayton but I would argue that we're going to know at the end of 2011 whether or not JGR are going to take that next step. The boys in North Carolina have signed former factory Honda rider Davi Millsaps to a one-year deal and often you can question a signing here or there but in this case I believe that this is going to work because, simply put, both sides need each other.

For a rider that scored five podiums and even got a win last year, Millsaps is looked upon by many as still not being able to fulfil his immense talent. Let's be frank here, even after ending up third in the AMA supercross series (outdoors he got hurt early on and wasn't a factor in the end) there was zero chance Honda were going to pick him up for a fifth year. The red riders had seen enough and I'm not really sure I've ever seen a rider with as good a CV as Millsaps who had about as much chance of returning to his team as I do winning the Boston Marathon.

Shane Drew, director of chassis development at factory Honda, was there for every one of Millsaps years at Honda and had this to say when asked what the deal was with Davi. "I don't know if it's the Damon Bradshaw syndrome [Bradshaw, an amateur MX prodigy, famously quit racing in the middle of a multi-year deal because he was burnt out] or not. He's a nice kid and has a good heart but he definitely doesn't get the results that he should be getting looking at the talent that he has. When you know the guy can go so fast but some days it's just not there you tend to get frustrated as a team.

"Talent wise the guy is amazing. At the end of the

day he'd drop a second or a second-and-a-half off his times and then go home. We'd be pretty excited about the weekend but it wouldn't happen for one reason or another."

In 2009 Honda introduced a brand new CRF450 and there were some riders like Ivan Tedesco and Millsaps that just couldn't get along with the bike. Davi definitely let the media know via the old 'things happened behind the scenes' routine that he was not happy with the bike. People at Honda acknowledge that the pre-season testing was going fine until they actually got the bike back to Southern California and started working with it day-in and day-out. Compounding the problem for Davi was that according to Drew his testing skills – which are almost as important as your actual race skills – let him down in getting comfortable on the bike.

"He's definitely a difficult guy to work with. Very fussy about his bike but never really knew how to explain it or talk to us about it. It was difficult to pinpoint. I don't think he was the best tester out there and we struggled at times giving him the bike he wanted."

Enter 2011 and enter JGRMX for the kid they call 'Big Treat'. And I say kid because, amazingly, Millsaps is only 22. He'll be 23 in February and that should tell everyone that he's far from washed up. At 22 he finds himself on his third team and what he must hope is a fresh start. When I spoke to JGRMX's team manager Jeremy Albrecht about hiring Davi and what the thought process was he was quick to say that it's really a win-win for the team and the rider. It's a one-year deal that is automatically renewed if Davi gets top three in supercross or motocross.

"Honestly, what happened was that we looked at the results from the last couple of years and we made a little scoring chart. Davi was very high up on the list. When we looked at the results he did better than we thought. The results were better than the perception you might say. He was near the top of our list and then it goes by who will live here and work with us. That gets rid of some guys. We talked to him before and he didn't want to do it but things changed and he came around to our way of doing things. He also has to use our trainers, do our programme and was the fastest guy to accept all the terms. It's that simple."

Many point to the too-much too-soon syndrome as to the cause of Millsaps' problems and certainly he had made a lot of money in his short career (an educated guess by 'someone who knows things'

would be that Millsaps has probably grossed somewhere in the region of seven million bucks so far) but really, with the lack of riders who can actually win a race, has he made too much money?

Some would still say so as one industry insider told me, when I told him I was in the process of writing this story, that he thinks Davi has more raw talent than Chad Reed or Ryan Dungey but is just afflicted with the same disease that has affected many 'can't miss' kids. When I asked him what that was he laughed and said "laziness".

Albrecht agrees. "Obviously he can win and everyone knows he has the talent, the only thing is he's not known to be the hardest worker and he seems like he's injured quite a bit. We've had him riding and in the gym to get him in great shape for the first race. It always seemed that he wasn't ready for A1 but by Atlanta he was on it. From the outside it looked like to me that he raced himself into shape. We're on him and we're pushing him. He doesn't like it but he's doing it.

"So far it's been good. It hasn't been great, the Geneva SX wasn't awesome for him. He injured his back a little bit, pinched some nerves and we have to get that going better. It's getting better. I just hope that's not what we're going to see down the road. But so far he's been doing everything that we want him to do."

So here we are going into Anaheim 1 with the same pre-season hype we have every year. The short list of possible race winners and title contenders are Ryan Dungey, Chad Reed, Ryan Villopoto and James Stewart. No-one is talking about Millsaps as being one of those guys, in fact not many are even talking about him being one of dark horse picks and really that's a shame. Remember, this guy won a race and ended the year on the box in the series points.

I believe that the combination of a team that's proven it can win and a rider that has proven he can win is a deadly one. Also, if you're Millsaps don't you have to figure that this is your last chance on top-notch equipment? The fire needs to be stoked inside the man-child and this change and the shock to the system of having someone there every day pushing you to use the talent you have may be just what the doctor ordered.

Maybe JGR can unlock the mystery that is Davi Millsaps? I'm not really sure to be honest but I do know this is a rider that needs what this team can give. He's just got to let it happen.





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*Has anyone seen the track?
It's around here somewhere...*



*Joe Wright - the
Bedford rascal!*



Aaron Edwards nails the
holeshot in the Expert class



Second in the
Clubman Ironman
division goes to
Gareth Lodge



WHITE RIOT!

OVER 200 REVVED-UP RACERS CONVERGE ON SNOWY SOUTH YORKSHIRE FOR THE DIALAWATCH.CO.UK FATCAT GP WHERE DESPITE THE BLANKET OF WHITE STUFF A BLAZIN', BAR-BANGIN' BATTLE IS ENJOYED BY ALL...

Words and photos by **Sutty**

A few feet of snow is the last thing anyone expects in the run up to Christmas but come the start of December and the planned weekend of the Dialawatch.co.uk FatCat

Grand Prix the whole country is shivering under a thick blanket of the white stuff!

"This area's been snow free throughout November and December for the past 40 years so we never expected this..." claims FatCat Motoparc boss Martin Craven as he surveys a scene that looks eerily like something from the North Pole minus Santa and his elves. Just three days before the FatCat GP – and one day before his new practice tracks are due to open – Martin looks like a broken man but with a ton of hard work from event facilitators Dirtbike-Traxs and the FatCat team, come race day the course is set and the FatCat GP's good to go – and believe it or not the practice track's open too. Good times!

With a massive entry of racers – some of whom have travelled from as far away as the south coast to be here – the action kicks off at 9.30am with the start of the Youth race which unfortunately for the nippers takes place in the deepest of the conditions. While Luke Owen yanks the Rip n' Roll holey on his RM85 it's Bedford rascal Joe Wright who's the star turn in the Youth field. Powering through the snow like it's barely there, the Honda-mounted 15-year-old battles against the technical course and an ill-sounding bike to lap the field on his way to a well-deserved victory with seven tours. Finishing second on five laps meanwhile is Hitchen's James Miles while Donny lad Jake Keogan secures third.

For the 65cc racers the going is

particularly tough but after 90 minutes of hard slog there are two brave finishers – the winner Dawson Marriott and nine-year-old Jacob Dell who manages a single tortuous lap with the help of his mum and dad.

With the course cleared of kids the Expert/Clubman/Over 40s Ironmen leave the line with Halifax's Harry Hillas ricocheting past the Rip n' Roll holeshot pole out front to take an early lead. Something of a hare scramble specialist, the 19-year-old manages to stay in the lead for the full three hours to take the FatCat GP win in the Ironman division with a massive 18 laps in the bag. Just over two minutes behind Hillas at the finish is runner-up David Myers and the consistent Coniston Brewery-sponsored Cumbrian is followed across the line by Rochdale's Damon Butler and Donny lad Alex Owen who definitely gets the award for running the biggest pair of handguards on the day. The prize? Toasty hands...

In the Clubman Ironman class Luke Copestake steers his 300cc Sherco to a convincing full-lap win over second-placed super hunk Gareth Lodge and bronze medallist Rob McCloud. Scarborough's Chris Cooper rockets to an amazing total of 17 tours to take the veterans Over 40 division ahead of Richard Cutts and Lincolnshire's Shaun Woffindon.

Mansfield's Shane Marriott claims the Sportsman Ironman division with a super-strong ride that sees him win his class by a full lap ahead of Rip n' Roll holeshot pole award winner Mark Mathison. Meanwhile, Leyland's Adam Zoellner keeps his 125cc Yamaha on the pipe to take a cracking third in a class stacked out with riders on much more powerful machinery. >>

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FATCAT GP - RESULTS

EXPERT IRONMAN

1	Harry Hillas	KTM	18 laps
2	David Myers	KTM	18
3	Damon Butler	Suzuki	18

EXPERT TEAM

1	Paul Bolton/Tom Healey	19 laps
2	Jack Rowlands/Joe Deakin	19
3	Sean Eckersley/Michael Reynolds	18

CLUBMAN IRONMAN

1	Luke Copestake	Sherco	17 laps
2	Gareth Lodge	KTM	16
3	Rob McLoud	Yamaha	16

CLUBMAN TEAM

1	Declan Helliwell/Reece Emson	17 laps
2	Phil Hancock/James Craft	17
3	Scott Altass/Luke Gorse	17

OVER 40 IRONMAN

1	Chris Cooper	KTM	17 laps
2	Richard Cutts	KTM	15
3	Shaun Woffindon	Honda	14

SPORTSMAN IRONMAN

1	Shane Marriott	KTM	16 laps
2	Mark Mathison	Suzuki	15
3	Adam Zoellner	Yamaha	15

SPORTSMAN TEAM

1	Ryan Burton/Carlton Husband	18 laps
2	Stuart Waterhouse/Vinnie Mullan	17
3	Gary Morley/Paul Sykes	17

YOUTH OPEN IRONMAN

1	Robbie White	Honda	11 laps
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YOUTH OPEN TEAM

1	Robert Davidson/Ben Halfpenny	17 laps
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SUPERMINI IRONMAN

1	Joe Wright	Honda	7 laps
2	James Miles	Honda	5
3	Jake Keogan	Honda	5

65cc IRONMAN

1	Dawson Marriot	KTM	1 lap
2	Jacob Dell	Kawasaki	1

Harry Hillas tops the Expert Ironman class



Supermini pilot Ben Clark ploughs through the snow

Jack Rowlands puts in the fastest lap of the day



While for the Ironmen it's all about consistency and endurance the riders in the Team classes are able to push harder which means the spectators see some excellent battles raging for the full three hours. The Expert division has Eurotek KTM teamsters Tom Healey and Paul Bolton take the class and overall event win with a combined total of 19 laps. Starting second behind Aaron Edwards, Healey soon puts his team out front and from there it's just a matter of clicking off the laps and staying consistent until the finish.

It's still a close run thing though and after three hours of racing there's less than 49 seconds in it at the end. MPS Husqvarna's Jack Rowlands and Joe Deakin push hard through the snow for the full duration with Rowlands setting the fastest lap of the day with a scorching 8:38.8 – some 10 seconds faster than Bolton and Healey's best – but sometimes raw speed is just not enough.

The Clubman Team class is the hardest fought of the lot with all three podium finishing teams crossing the line within 30 seconds of each other. It's the South Yorkshire pairing of Declan Helliwell and Reese Emson who take victory in the end by a mere 1.4 seconds ahead of late entries Phil Hancock and James Craft. Amazingly close throughout the event, even the

two leading team's best times are also less than half-a-second apart. Scott Altass and Luke Gorse finish a further 25 seconds back to take the final podium position ahead of Broke FMX's Sam Turner and stand-in rider for the MIA John Pearson, David Wood.

A slip up in the entries process sees Ryan Burton and Carlton Husband put into the Sportsman class when perhaps they should have been classified as Clubmen or probably even Experts. The end result is that the speedy North Easterners dominate the Sportsman class and end up winning by a full lap with more tours completed than even the Clubman class winners – d'oh! Carlton's dad Alan sums up the situation perfectly. "They entered into the wrong class by mistake – Carlton and Ryan are okay at riding their bikes but they're not the brightest peas in the pod..."

Credited as finishing second overall on the day but perhaps the genuine winners of the Sportsman class are Stuart Waterhouse and Vinnie Mullan who battle through the snow from Last of the Summer Wine country to finish with a very respectable total of 17 laps which is the exact same total as the third placed team of Gary Morley and Paul Sykes who also hail from the Holmfirth area – they obviously build 'em tough up there!

WOOLLY THUMPERS...

...AND MORE THAN A FEW TWO-STROKERS N'ALL
AS BOXING DAY'S TRADITIONAL ALTERNATIVE TO
COLD TURKEY AND CRAPPY TV BRAVES THE BIG CHILL

Words by Fraser Law Photos by Fraser Law and motoxphotos.co.uk

For most Boxing Day is a time of relaxation, recovery from the previous day's excesses, rubbish television and treasured time at home with families. In the small Northamptonshire village of Blisworth, however, Boxing Day means motorcycles and mud and mayhem – aka the Northampton MCC's Wild and Woolly Scramble.

This year all the pre-race discussions focus on the weather. With December being the coldest one on record and the weather records going back even further than the history of the race this makes it officially the coldest Woolly ever. While many people doubt the race will go ahead, the club are anxious to point out that the Woolly has never been cancelled due to the weather. True, there have been a few years when it wasn't possible to run – thanks mainly to a couple of world wars, the Suez Canal fuel crisis and a Foot and Mouth outbreak – but no scheduled race has ever been called off.

This year's 85th running is no exception, despite deep snow on the course and the river crossings being frozen solid. With the temperature -9 in the pits just before the start it's obvious this year is going to be extremely tough for the riders.

The local Expert riders entered start favourites for the win with nine-time winner Ryan Griffiths eager to make it 10 – especially as '09 winner James Berrill can't ride this time around through injury. James is still in attendance though, preparing his bike for ex-British champion Neil Prince to contest his first Woolly on. Michael McClurg is also competing this year alongside fellow Experts Dale Raynor, James Barnwell, Adam Castledine and Jack Lee.

Bikes used vary enormously from modern four-strokes to older model two-strokes and there's even a heavily modified KTM 85. Many have the air filters replaced with long snorkel attachments to keep the water out and all are heavily waterproofed and have ropes and pulling devices attached to help extract them from the river crossings. Most popular bike is probably the 250 two-stroke – reliable, simple to waterproof, easy to start and cheap to repair. All-out speed is rarely a requirement for this event. To win you need supreme bike riding skills, a little luck and plenty of experience.

For the first few minutes of practice the track looks more like a ski resort than a motocross circuit, then during the second lap the ice gives way and dumps the brave riders into the freezing mire below. The third water crossing soon becomes virtually impassable without a great deal of assistance and before the start of the race it's controversially decided to cut out this loop of the track. This makes the track a bit easier to negotiate, allowing for a proper race to occur.

*The volunteer marshals are
the real stars of the show*

Neil Prince – he's the clean one –
motors to second overall in his
first Wild and Woolly

Just before 11am in keeping with tradition there's an eerie silence in readiness for the dead-engine start. Exactly on the hour the starter's Union Jack is raised, the bikes roar into life and set off with Jack Lee on a 300cc Gas Gas two-stroke leading into the first water crossing. And Jack holds the lead for the first few laps just as he did in 2009 before succumbing to pressure.

This year he's closely followed by Michael McClurg, Neil Prince, Ryan Griffiths and Kai Passmore-Jones. The difference in style and technique at the front is marked – Jack's using all his trials and enduro experience to the full to give a fast yet smooth and unflustered performance on the softer-powered enduro bike. Behind him the motocrossers are more aggressive, spectacular and high-revving.

On the second lap McClurg slips to fourth allowing Neil Prince and Ryan Griffiths to slide past. Ryan sets off on a mission to catch the leaders, reaching Prince on lap three. The two battle closely for most of lap four, coming together a number of times with neither willing to concede. But an ill-fated pass attempt from Ryan going up the steep railway embankment leads to him tangling with the ropes, an incident from which he will never fully recover.

This leaves Neil in a comfortable second as all the time Jack pulls away from the pack, hardly putting a foot wrong. Further down the field many of the riders find the first few laps tough going and such is Jack's speed that by lap five he's lapped up to fourth. Now only Neil Prince, Michael McClurg and Ryan Griffiths remain on the same lap as the leader but Jack's pace is relentless, reaching Ryan on lap six and Michael by lap eight.

From that point on Prince is the only rider able to match the pace of the enduro rider out front, managing to stay on the same lap for a very creditable further 11 laps. But two laps from the end even he is powerless to resist Jack's advances and concedes a lap.

At this point, with the race all but over, Jack's still thrilling the spectators by ignoring the easier lines around the perimeter of the first river crossing. Instead he opts for hitting the deep muddy centre section at speed, jumping across from the solid ice shelf at the river's entrance. Bouncing up the exit bank and straight out with barely a wobble, he makes it look easy. It's not...

WILD AND WOOLLY SCRAMBLE

RESULTS

1	Jack Lee	21 laps
2	Neil Prince	20 laps
3	Michael McClurg	18 laps
4	Ryan Griffiths	18 laps
5	Rob Saunders	16 laps
6	Dale Raynor	16 laps
7	Marc Bates	16 laps
8	Matt Willis	15 laps
9	James Barnwell	15 laps
10	Adam Castledine	15 laps

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★ **TWIST OF FATE!**
WE CATCH UP WITH TEAM TWISTED 7

★ **ROBBIE SCOTT!**
CANNOCK CRACKER LINES UP BSMA TITLE

★ **BACK AND FORTH!**
STAR RIDERS AND TOUGH COOKIES

OLLIE OSMASTON



TWIST OF FATE!

JEFF PERRETT AND HIS GANG GIVE THE SCHOOLIE SCENE A SHOT IN THE ARM...

The Twisted 7 riders pose with, from left, Russ Wells, Dan Stride and Ben Tubey at last year's Dirt Bike Show team launch

It's one of the most interesting and positively charged news items to emerge from the past few months – Twisted 7 have a dynamic new hook-up with Kawasaki.

The deal has already given the 2011 schoolie scene a shot in the arm and the team aims to be a powerful and challenging force in this year's youth national championships.

Just before Christmas we tracked down team boss Jeff Perrett and he gave Rage the low-down on a few of the finer details of the partnership and a real insight into the thinking behind the project.

Rage: Will the full youth squad be entered into both BYMX and Elite Youth Cup championships and possibly even more events?

JP: "All six of our full youth riders – James Harrison, Ty and Todd Kellett, David Keet, Sid Evans and Harry Kimber – will be racing both the BYMX and RBEYC, naturally with the aim to win. Lewis Trickett will compete as our first year pro racer in the RBPN and Maxxis MX2 championship. James and Ty will also compete in the MX2 at the Maxxis rounds.

"There's no pressure on them, not from the team anyway. One of the main reasons they are all on the team is that they are all highly self-motivated and the only pressure on their shoulders will be from themselves. It's up to us as a team to keep them focused – none of them need firing up!"

Rage: Will the Twisted 7 presence in the paddock be in the shape of a works type truck with mechanic?

JP: "Absolutely! We're working on the truck designs right now although the riders will not be working out of the awning as there's not enough

room! That's not the real reason though. We want the riders to be in a comfortable environment and one that doesn't add any pressure so they'll be working out of their own vans and the team van will be a communal hospitality vehicle for all – including any supporters we may have!

"Although we are going to be every bit professional in our approach, it's still youth motocross and we won't jeopardise the fun factor – no way. The concept is to guide these riders all the way through to pro level. We're not trying to reinvent the wheel, our aim is to reinvent the Team Green policy that they introduced in the late '70s and modernise it a little."

Rage: Will you be at all of the youth nationals to motivate and oversee operations?

JP: "Yeah, I'll be at nearly all of them. There may be a couple I don't attend due to other commitments within the sport – I have to earn a living after all! The team truck will be at all of them and we have already built a great team and support network for the riders.

"Russ Wells is the team fitness and motivational coach. He's helped Ty tremendously in his rehabilitation since his horrific Weston Beach Race accident and did wonders for Todd which showed in his performances in the second part of 2010. He'll be helping the entire team and I'll be riding with the lads as much as possible and helping them with lines and their attitude at the weekends, then all my family will be helping. My brother Shawn used to be my mechanic and is great at bike set-up so he'll be helping all the riders too."

Rage: Do you see the Twisted 7 set-up as an ongoing project that can expand year on year –

possibly becoming something of a youth academy for Kawasaki?

JP: "Definitely – 100 per cent. There's a definitive plan to do this. This is now my #1 priority after five years of running a pro level MX race team on a next-to-nothing budget, often putting in my own money and also holding down pretty major job roles within the industry. In actual fact, we're now at a point where Twisted 7 was meant to be from the outset.

"Steve Guttridge [Kawasaki Europe Racing Coordinator] got behind my idea back in 2005 but it made sense to team up with Bryan MacKenzie and start a small pro team for Kawasaki with the idea to add some kids to it later. Now it's fallen nicely to where I really want it to be and we're back with Kawasaki – it's like coming home and both us and Kawasaki are excited about that. Twisted 7 was always meant to be a team with a different edge to the others, I think we've achieved that so far but this has now sharpened that edge.

"I'm really excited. Excited to be working with riders that warrant the support. I'm sure there's loads of people out there thinking the parents have splashed the cash to get their kids on the team and that's not the case at all. Nobody has paid for a ride, that's not what we are about. I approached most of them because I believe they have the talent to succeed in the sport and they present themselves well.

"We'll be expanding over the years with a solid foundation that's for sure. We have great support from Kawasaki. Mitch Payton at Pro Circuit has got behind the idea directly through CGH Imports here in the UK who will be helping us loads with technical support. One Industries and 661 are right behind us as are Monster Energy, Goldentyre, Spectro Oils,

SPOTLIGHT ON...ROBBIE SCOTT

HOMETOWN: CANNOCK, STAFFORDSHIRE **DOB:** 21-05-04

SPONSORS: MX27, SPIRAL GFX, JW RACING, GOLDENTYRE

Imagine at just six years old flying off to Tennessee in the good old USA for a ride at the world's biggest youth event – Loretta Lynn's. Then try to imagine just how disappointed the little fella was when his promised Cobra machinery failed to arrive, leaving him high and dry and watching from the sidelines. But all's well that ends well however for young Robbie Scott and it should be smiles all around later this year with the Stateside trip back on again.

It's going to be a big year from quite a few angles with the new BSMA Auto national series on the agenda too. The fledgling championship kicks off at Wilden Lane in March and it could well turn out to be a proper little belter and the BSMA have been very careful to run on extremely Auto-friendly circuits.

Scotty doesn't have a lot of ancient history to rabbit on about but he's certainly making swift progress this winter and seriously looking like a possible contender for that Auto title. It's not only me thinking that way either with a fully supported Husqvarna ride still in the melting pot. Robbie hopes to be throwing a leg over one of the new machines for a test session pretty soon – but chatting to him back in December here's what he had to say in a Rage Q&A.

Rage: What do you love best about MX?

RS: "I like to race because it makes me fit and I love all the trophies. And I love the look

on Uncle Mark's face when I win."

Rage: What's your main ambition for 2011?

RS: "To win the BSMA 50cc national title and ride at Loretta Lynn's."

Rage: What's the long term ambition?

RS: "To be a pro MX rider and ride in the States and achieve the best results possible."

Rage: Who's your favourite pro?

RS: "Ricky Carmichael because he rides on the edge but has total control and unreal fitness."

Rage: How about your fav track?

RS: "Polesworth! I love the fast straight and the rough bumps."

Rage: What's your fav food?

RS: "I love Chinese ribs and curry – Uncle Mark calls me a human garbage bin because I eat anything."

Rage: Fav TV programme, movie and computer game?

RS: "Spongebob, Predator and MX v ATV..."

Rage: Most respected Auto rival?

RS: "Lewis Pyne and Sam Davis."

Rage: Best friend in the paddock?

RS: "Amy Pyne."



Renthal, Muc-Off, MXM and many more to come. They are big industry names who all see the long-term goal we are trying to achieve here.

"I can't say too much right now but there are big plans ahead with a good structure and I think we'll surprise a lot of people with our approach. One of our main priorities is to find and nurture talented motocross riders."

Rage: What do you personally think about the current state of youth MX?

JP: "I think it's back on the up. I really do. Which makes this even more exciting for me. On a personal level this sport has given so much – good friends all around the world and good times – and I've always tried to repay it. First with putting my heart and soul into being a magazine editor to trying and elevate the sport and then with my job for the MCF and the Red Bull Pro Nationals. Now I can take it a step further by focusing on my own team."

"I think we have some good talent coming through in the UK and in the next five to 10 years we'll be producing some really good riders that, if things go well for them, could be pushing for a world championship."

"The thing I dislike about it the most though is pushy parents. I appreciate they've worked hard all week to pay for it and it isn't cheap but it's a family sport to be enjoyed by all and kids in particular should be happy and left to be kids. Most of the time heaping that kind of pressure on them will only have a negative effect. If they're really enjoying it, then more than likely they'll get to an age where they know that's what they want to do with their life and then it can get more serious. Everyone at Twisted 7 Kawasaki will be having a good time, that's for sure."



Uncle Mark gives Robbie some last-minute advice



Leading good mate Sam Davis

Robbie's aiming for the BSMA title in 2011



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BACK AND FORTH!

A LOOK BACK AT 2010 AND A LOOK FORWARD INTO 2011

Best wishes to all in 2011! But before we take a little look forward let's take a quick glance back with a few gongs to dish out. My rider of the year vote goes to Adam Sterry. No-one predicted his phenomenal success in winning the BYMX and Masters BW titles – and no-one raised their game more than he did last year. Sterry was one of the younger guys in the most competitive section and he won the toughest BYMX shoot-out in real style.

The best one-race performance of the year award goes to Ben Watson for his fourth place finish at the worlds – a truly stunning effort by any measure. A tough cookie gong goes to Albie Wilkie – mainly for the way he carried an injury through the early part of the season but still finished up as a double champion in BYMX and BSMA. Wilkie only just edged out Robo Cop Garland who arguably ended his schoolie days as the fastest big wheeler around. Good luck in the pro ranks Liam.

Okay, that's enough from 2010 – what have we got coming up? Well it looks like some nasty clashes are heading our way with the BYMX and Masters series sitting together on the same weekend five times out of seven. It's make your mind up time then between those two competitions but elsewhere it's a clear run with some truly outstanding venues on offer.

It's great to see Desertmartin back on the calendar for both BYMX and EYC and also interesting to note that the BSMA have opted to include an Auto class – grabbing a bit of brand loyalty early doors could be a real winner in these testing times.

2011 CALENDAR

BYMX

Rd1	March 12/13	Mepal, Cambridgeshire
Rd2	April 9/10	Finningley, South Yorkshire
Rd3	May 14/15	Duns, Scotland
Rd4	June 18/19	Dean Moor, Cumbria
Rd5	July 16/17	Canada Heights, Kent
Rd6	August 6/7	Desertmartin, NI
Rd7	September 10/11	Milton Park, Northamptonshire

RED BULL ELITE YOUTH CUP

Rd1	April 2/3	FatCat MotoParc, Doncaster
Rd2	May 7/8	Landrake, Cornwall
Rd3	June 11/12	Whitby, Yorkshire
Rd4	July 30/31	Canada Heights, Kent
Rd5	August 27/28	Hawkstone Park, Shropshire
Rd6	September 3/4	Desertmartin, NI
Rd7	September 17/18	Wakes Colne, Essex

BSMA

Rd1	March 26/27	Wilden Lane, Worcs
Rd2	April 30/May 1	Mepal, Cambridgeshire
Rd3	May 28/29	Wroxton, Oxfordshire
Rd4	June 25/26	Brookthorpe, Gloucestershire
Rd5	July 23/24	Stratford, Warks
Rd6	August 27/28	Culham, Oxfordshire

MASTERS

Rd1	March 12/13	Silverstone, Leicestershire
Rd2	April 23/24	Pontrilas, Herefordshire
Rd3	May 14/15	Whitby, Yorkshire
Rd4	June 18/19	Foxhill, Wiltshire
Rd5	July 2/3	Mallory, Leicestershire
Rd6	August 6/7	Hawkstone Park, Shropshire
Rd7	September 10/11	Dean Moor, Cumbria

Adam Sterry came out of nowhere to record an awesome 2010



Tough cookie Albie Wilkie



TOM ROGERS

Without doubt the saddest piece of news from last year arrived just before Christmas. Following a three-year battle against cancer Tom Rogers passed away on December 13 at just 15 years old. We featured Tom on the Rage pages in 2007 as a talented and up-and-coming SW rider. Everyone at DBR would like to express their deepest condolences to family and friends.

GOT A STORY FOR RAGE?

Then contact our Youth Editor Mike Gurney at mikegurney55@yahoo.co.uk



SWEET DREAMS!

BILLY'S CHASING DOWN A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP WHICH ISN'T QUITE AS SIMPLE AS IT SOUNDS...

Photos by Rudi Baker

I recently found myself in the position of having to buy myself a new bed. When I first came to Oz I kinda just fitted myself out with a semi-decent home set-up from a place called Fantastic Furniture. So I got myself a nice little array of necessities which included a king-sized bed, sofa, table and chairs, bedside tables, kitchen chairs – you get the idea. I remember when I was in the place I was doing the same bed testing thing as Bry describes on his website one-twenty-one.com in his 'How to test a bed' blog but probably just not as awkwardly as Pistol Pete. I genuinely wanted myself a good bed but also wasn't really prepared to pay over the top as I didn't know how long I'd be staying here for. I had a little bounce around and stuff but ended up choosing a medium priced king-sized and thought nothing more of it.

Before I left for Oz however I did the same thing back home but on that occasion I went all-out. I got myself a huge super-king-sized f**king insanely comfortable bed cos I was setting up my place in Southampton as my 'home'. The reason I got a super-king was so I could roll over and flap around without smacking Harriet in the chops! I like to move around when I sleep almost as much as I do while awake. Forever a gypsy I think! So that was probably the hardest thing to leave behind and it pains me to know that little midget Osborne is sleeping in it, it really does. At least I know it won't be getting used for any extra-curricular activities, however I do worry about his bad dreams...

So it's time for me to buy a new bed but not just one bed – two this time. My Fantastic Furniture bed ain't so fantastic anymore and the bed frame that looked fancy at the time has turned into a creeky wreck.

My phone has been ringing more frequently the past few weeks and the house has become overrun with UK immigrants migrating south for the winter. I've had my old mate from school come knock on my door literally like we used to do at home. I was sat on my sofa channel flicking when I saw Steven walk down the path! The guy who started me off racing lives only 15

minutes down the road and is now a regular running/mountain biking partner. I've had my old 2008/09 mechanic Teasy stop by in a whirlwind of backpacking and my old partner in training Keith Amor is here to stay till March and into the future I have Harriet's dad flying in on Monday!

It's all systems go and now my little two-bedroom love nest has turned into a busy little hive in preparation for 2011. So the spare bedroom which was Harriet's 'walk in closet' is currently being turned into her old man's place of rest which is why there's the need to buy two beds. Keith has been relocated to the sofa while big Iggy is here – he is bigger after all...

So off to the store to buy new beds... I did a little bit of searching on the intraban beforehand just to get a feel for prices and locations etc. I stumbled across this website that 'makes mattresses' – I won't mention any names just yet. I shoulda realised what I was getting myself into when I saw the font they used on their website – like some kinda amateur word press bubble font.

Anyways, I read through their website and I was sold! Everything they were going on about made absolute sense. They make the mattresses in their own factory. They use imported Italian latex foam, are 40 per cent cheaper than showroom prices and offer a 10-year warranty too. Winner I thought – exactly what I'm wanting and only a 10-minute drive from my house too. So without any further research or investigation I drove up to the factory and had a look around.

It wasn't your typical showroom because after all this is the factory where they're made. You could see through the glass to where everything was getting put together from a pretty poorly decorated 'showroom'. The sales woman had a bad energy about her, kinda like she didn't even wanna bother trying to sell me one because no-one ever buys them! I kinda ignored my higher primate instincts and just reassured myself that the whole point of this exercise was to cut out all the bull and buy a mattress that I want to sleep on forever.

I bounced around on a few and after a few

awkward questions regarding build quality and warranty I noticed that the timber-built bases had drawers which didn't fit flush. I ended up choosing the biggest, most expensive one (which wasn't all that expensive) plus a queen-sized guest bed for H's dad then I swiped my credit card. Straight after the cash was transferred she handed me a list of dos and don'ts for my mattress! I had to flip it every five days, toss it every two hours and lie in the middle to read a book whenever I wasn't sleeping! I had that weird stomach feeling – like I had done something wrong – but I put that off to just spending money! I am Scottish after all...

A couple of days rolled past and this feeling didn't go away and I started to worry. 'Surely they can't be that bad' I thought to myself but my curiosity got the better of me and after wandering aimlessly through Myer Shopping Centre on a failed Christmas shopping attempt I was drawn towards the bed section and I started bouncing around on a few beds again to see if I could feel the difference.

With that I had a very polite, mature lady approach me with a very professional manner about her. After the initial meet and greet, I proceeded to off-load all my worries and troubles regarding the new mattresses I had bought like it was some kind of sleep counselling session. I told her my story and she listened and I felt better! Part of my counselling session involved her advising me that recent customers of the mattress factory had been very unhappy with their purchases. With that I was convinced I had made the wrong decision, I just needed to hear it from someone else!

Back home and I jumped straight on the internet, searching reviews of the mattress factory. Over 40 reviews and not one positive comment – literally everyone had given them one star! Well there was one five star review but I'm pretty sure it was someone from the factory! I was gutted. I had just spent a load of dosh on what I thought was quality mattresses and now I knew I was gonna have years of horrible sweating, sinking, heavy sleeps... I just couldn't bear the thought so I hatched a plan.



The mattresses/beds hadn't been delivered yet, in fact it had only been three days since they swiped my credit card and they were due to arrive on Friday. I phoned and made up some cock and bull story about Harriet's dad already ordering two beds as a house warming present and they had already arrived. The woman on the phone didn't like it and I could tell in her voice that they didn't wanna give any refunds!

They must have been the only mattresses they'd sold in months and I'm guessing that the boss man wouldn't be having any of it! I tried to make my story sound as convincing as possible and she ended the call by saying she would have to speak to her manager in the morning and I should come in to see what they could do. It didn't sound good and it got even worse when I rocked up in the morning as requested only to be met with suspicious eyes by the horrible sales woman. I gave her my best puppy dog eyes and pleaded poverty as well as the pressure to impress the in-laws.

I didn't get anywhere, I drove to the factory for nothing as the excuse that was fired back to me was that they were waiting for a call from head office and she would give me a call today at some point. I couldn't wait all day – what if there was some deadline to the cooling off period that she didn't tell me? Surely customers have the right to cancel an order before it's delivered? Kinda like taking back a pair of jeans that don't fit! I was stressing hard, looking over my receipt for some kinda terms and conditions that I might have missed. There was nothing but it looked like I had every right to cancel my order and eventually after a few phone calls I had the manager from the factory call me and say they could refund me but I'd be charged a five per cent cancellation fee as they had already started building one of the timber bases...

It was difficult to argue with him on the phone as I wasn't prepared for it so we had this weird awkward kinda silence after I stumbled my point across that surely a cancellation fee isn't appropriate as it hasn't been delivered yet? He sounded just as hesitant but it was a war of wills and to be honest I was quite happy to get a

refund and accepted the fee cos I knew I was the one who was bullying!

I had to go back in to have it refunded to my card and everyone was all smiles. It seemed my story had worked. I milked it even more and thanked them so much for helping me out.

So now it was time to try again with the Christmas shopping and visit the nice mattress lady in Myer Shopping Centre to see if she could help with this problem. But first...

There's an 'entrance' into the Big W supermarket in town, kinda like a side entrance from the street but not an exit. I was having a really bad day – one of the worst shopping experiences ever! I was in this huge Big W with so many consumer goods surrounding me and not a clue what to buy. I decided to get out of there and start again somewhere new so I headed for the 'entrance' which was guarded by an overweight ginger woman with a badge. It was a three-door circular push thing – like a Mercedes badge if you were looking at it from above – so you could easily go round in the little glass vortex but the woman said "you can't and that's an order".

I stood there and looked at her like 'what the f**k?' but I could tell that her badge was getting the better of her and decided to avoid conflict and use the larger entrance/exit on the other side of the store which brought me out on the complete opposite side of where my car was parked! Being outside brought calm over me and I strolled down the busy street towards the car. As I was walking down I noticed the same entrance to Big W so decided to amuse myself by doing a 360 entrance/exit move through the heavily guarded glass roundabout. I had these funny Gatorz sunglasses on and my hair was pretty weird looking so I wasn't hard to miss. I started laughing in my head, then out loud as I approached the doors. I pushed on the door and kept a dead straight face while looking slightly to my left to see if badge lady was there. I got to the point of no return before I heard her shout "this is an entrance only!". I was stuck between the glass in my own little triangle and I started to feel the door getting heavier – she must have

been pushing in the opposite direction in a last ditch effort to stop anyone passing through to the outside world!

I had to push pretty hard and I felt my muscles hurting a little from my morning's gym effort but as I beat her in our battle I burst out laughing! I walked on a few metres having a jolly to myself as I heard her shout out behind me "that's all on camera!". She was stood outside n'all. It totally made up for having such a rubbish day and I laughed to myself for a good 10 minutes after. Brilliant.

After that I was in a far more relaxed mood. I was just wandering around seeing what caught my eye instead of looking for an exact item. I did end up back in the bed store and got talking to another very helpful woman. I talked for ages about the things I want from a bed and – back to the original topic of this whole column – when buying a bed you have to understand the whole design of a bed before you can understand how it feels. Kinda like suspension testing!

You gotta know what you like before you jump on it. You gotta have an idea in your head based on what you think your perfect sleep would be. Do you want to feel like you're sleeping on a cloud? Soft and fluffy? Or more like spongy long grass with a soft peaty bottom? It's up to you but think about it, visualise it, feel it. I like a firm bed that doesn't bounce. I don't like a springy feeling. I want slow but firm rebound when I land on it but a nice plush top that feels comfortable.

All these things can be found out by knowing a little bit about what makes your mattress. What kinda springs? There are loads of different styles – springs that are connected, springs that stand by themselves or if you wanna go all top-end this cool latex memory foam stuff. There are even some crazy inter-linked rubber patterns that work as the main structure in the middle.

Everyone needs to get out of bed in the morning and feel good – so go do your homework people and you can even transfer your results to setting up suspension!

BD 211



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